

Nationality and Belonging

A case study of a Palestinian community in Egypt.

Master thesis in Human Geography
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Abstract

This thesis is concerned with nationality and belonging in the context of a Palestinian community in Egypt. A central concept in the theory is the discourse of “belonging as nationality”. I use this term to describe all the discursive practises that together have the effect of equalling belonging with nationality. Within this discourse belonging is interpreted as nationality and nothing else.

In my analysis I argue that the discourse of “belonging as nationality” has a big impact on Palestinians in Egypt, because it has been instrumental in determining the laws and regulations which govern their lives. The Palestinians have been constructed as guests in Egypt, and thus they have not been given Egyptian citizenship and they are treated as foreigners in Egyptian law. They are constructed as people that belong in Palestine, and giving them right in Egypt is seen as a threat to this construction.

I also analyse the ways in which the members of a Palestinian community in Egypt is actively using the discourse of “belonging as nationality” in some situations and discarding it or even resisting it in other situations.

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Chapter 1:

Introduction

During the autumn of 2009 I spent two months doing fieldwork in Egypt. The stories I heard during this time were a strong testimony to the situations of the Palestinians in Egypt. I heard of an old man in prison for having the wrong nationality and a young man detained for showing the wrong papers. A young boy that had to quit school because he could not afford to pay the fees that no one else has to pay and a young woman that cannot follow the tuition in her university for the same reason. Grown ups that are banned from formal work, and children that are told that they do not belong in the country where they are living. The stories are about people whose nationality is limiting their opportunities, but also people who are proud of who their nation. They are people who dedicate their time to Palestinian institutions working for the Palestinian people and the Palestinian cause, and people who spend hours teaching and being taught about Palestinian cultural heritage and traditions.

I have chosen to write my thesis about nationality in the case of a Palestinian community in Egypt. Nationality is a very central concept in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, yet it has received relatively little attention compared with other concepts like for example religion. Nationality is a term that is used to describe big groups of people with a common history, language and culture, and nationality is inherited from parents to children together with the national characteristics. According to the nationalist discourse every nation has a right to a sovereign state on its own territory, and this is at the centre of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The Israeli state makes claim to its territory as the territory of the Jewish nation, while the Palestinians who are living in that land, or where living there prior to 1948, do not acknowledge this claim.

Another central aspect of the conflict is the millions of Palestinian refugees from the many wars between Israel and the surrounding Arab states that are hindered from returning to their homes. According to Kagan (2007, p5):

“Palestinian refugees are unable to return not because they are in danger at the places of origin (the classic condition of a refugee), but because the new government there has simply decided as a matter of policy to forbid their return”.

A majority of Palestinian refugees live in Gaza or the West Bank, or in camps in surrounding Arab countries, most notably Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. While some research have been done on these refugees, almost no research is done on the approximately 70 000 Palestinians currently living in Egypt. These people live dispersed around the country and mixed with the Egyptian population, not in refugee

camps. They have little in common except for their Palestinian background. Many of them have been living in Egypt their whole life, indeed a substantial number of families have been living there since the war of 1948 (ElAbed 2009). What is it that makes these people Palestinian and not Egyptian?

The labels we choose to give to specific people are dependent upon the discourses we use to interpret the world, and these discourses are again determined by political relations. In my thesis I will study a discourse I have entitled “belonging as nationality”, which is a set of discursive actions that constructs belonging as a question of nationality and nothing else. Central to this discourse is the concepts of home-land and host-country. A persons homeland is the land where the person belongs according to his or her nationality, any other country where the person might reside will be merely a host-country, in other words a country where he or she might live for a period of time as a guest, but he or she will never belong there or be fully integrated into the country.

Research question:

The thesis seeks to answer the following question:

- How is the discourse of “belonging as nationality” experienced and used within a Palestinian community in Egypt?

This research question is both theoretically and socially relevant. It is theoretically relevant because it opens up for a new perspective on studying nationality, through a new case. It is socially relevant because it touches upon socially important issues, such as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and the problem of stateless refugees.

In addition to the main research question, I have two sub-questions that I have used to give the analysis further direction and narrow the focus down to the most important issues:

- How has the discourse of "belonging as nationality" been used to describe and determine the relations of Palestinians living in Egypt to Palestine and Egypt?
- How are my interviewees experiencing and reacting to “belonging as nationality” in their daily life

My analysis consists of three chapters. The first chapter serves as an introduction to the case, and the two following chapters are discussing the two sub-questions separately.

The conditions of the Palestinians in Egypt are to some extent determined by Egypt’s role in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The time after 1948 was characterized by the Egyptian authorities support for the Palestinian cause. They were instrumental in the early Arab wars against Israel, and propagators behind the establishment of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). It was very important to the Egyptian authorities that the Palestinians kept their Palestinian nationality, as this was seen as a precondition for their return, yet in the period of Abd ElNasser’s government they were treated on a par with Egyptian nationals. With the signing of the Camp David Agreements

between Egypt and Israel, and Egypt's subsequent reorientation towards the West and Israel, relations between the Egyptian authorities and the PLO deteriorated dramatically. This had dramatic impact on the Palestinians in Egypt. The government still denied them Egyptian citizenship, but at the same time they withdrew all regulations that treated them as Egyptian nationals, and from the late 70's Palestinians in Egypt have been treated as foreigners by the laws. The first of my analysis chapter discusses further the history of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Palestinian immigration to Egypt and the present Palestinian community in Egypt.

In my thesis, I argue that the discourse of "belonging as nationality" has been instrumental in determining the government's treatment of the Palestinians in Egypt. This might not be intended by the government, but it is definitely important for how both ElAbed (2009) and my interviewees describe the situation. This is also true for the Israeli regulations that hinder Palestinian refugees from returning to their previous homes. In this way my interviewees experienced that the discourse of "belonging as nationality" was forced upon them from above by the Egyptian authority, the Israeli authority, and even the PLO-institutions. I include the PLO-institutions together with the Egyptian and Israeli authorities, because representatives of the PLO-institutions that I spoke with during my fieldwork in Cairo were insisting that no Palestinians should be given any other citizenship than the Palestinian, because this would compromise the right to return. In this they interpret the Palestinian situation through the discourse of "belonging as nationality", and because of their position in the Palestinian community that was the focus of my study, they have the power to make this interpretation the leading interpretation within the community.

My interviewees also used the discourse actively to interpret their own situation, but they only used it when it could provide them with satisfying explanations. In other instances they discarded the discourse, or even directly opposed it. The direct opposition to the discourse was not explicit in their opinions. They were careful not to criticize the government or the PLO-institutions, yet by telling me about their grievances they let me know that the situation was far from good. And even though they usually did not blame the government for the situation, it is easy to see that the government is to blame for making the rules that led directly to the grievances they told me about.

Among the very few recently concluded studies on Palestinians in Egypt, the most notable was published by Oroub El Abed in 2009. This study is concerned with the rights and livelihoods of Palestinians residing in Egypt, but it is not concerned with issues of their nationality, except when it is directly intercepting with their rights. In addition to this study, a few minor studies have been done, but no major studies have been published on the nationality of Palestinians in Egypt. Because of the huge diversity within among the Palestinians in Egypt, and the relatively small scope of my thesis, I have limited my studies to a relatively small, but important, community of Palestinians in

Cairo.

During a two months fieldwork in Cairo, Egypt, I interviewed 15 people within the community. The interviews were relatively unstructured, and the interviewees were free to speak about issues that were important to them at the same task as I had some questions that all the interviewees answered. In addition I was present in the community on several occasions. Towards the end of my fieldwork I also spent some time with some of my interviewees apart from the interview situation. My study builds primarily on the formal interviews, but being present in the community, together with my previous knowledge of Egypt, has also been important for my general understanding of the case. In 2007 I spent 4 months studying Arabic in Cairo, and when I returned to do my fieldwork, I was reminded how different this city is from every other place I have been. Especially the legal system strikes me as significantly different. The Egyptian police forces are severely dysfunctional, and corruption plays an important role, yet violence is uncommon and street fights almost non-existent. It seems to me that ensuring public safety and nonviolence has the highest priority, while the enforcement of general laws is highly arbitrary and to a certain extent depending on personal relations between the law enforcement and those who are found breaking the law.

Theoretical approach

My study is grounded in an understanding of the world built on social constructivism. I believe that in order to understand the world, we have to interpret it through pre-existing categories that have developed through centuries. Within social constructivism, one of the most important tools to make sense of the world is representations. A representation is a word or another symbol that refers to something else, in the way the word apple refers to the object we have named apple. Because we can only use words, not actual objects, to think and speak with, the world is only available for us through the representations. Because of this, the way we represent the world is vital for how we understand it, and for all production of knowledge.

A discourse is a specific system of representations that makes some thoughts possible and logical while others become illogical or even impossible. One such discourse is the nationalist discourse. Within the nationalist discourse, the division of the world into nations has become naturalized, and from this follows that every man should belong to a nation and stay in his national homeland. Because of the hegemonic status of the nationalist discourse, it is difficult to imagine a world without nations, but the increase in migration during the last few decades makes the claim that every man should stay in his national home-land less and less viable.

Outline of the thesis

Chapter 2 of the thesis is the theory chapter. This chapter starts with an outline of various theories of representation and discourses. Important issues in this part includes different ways of representing groups, such as stereotyping and differentiating between ones own group and the others, and positionality within the discourse, or the way discourses contain a set of roles that people can act within. I will also touch upon the power aspect of discourses and representations.

The second part of the chapter is problematizing the concept of nation within a perspective of representations and discourses. The chapter starts by discussing some discursive aspects of the nation, and continues with a short summary of the history of the nation. Further it discusses such issues as the relationship between nationality and citizenship, and the concepts of home-and and host-country. Especially important is the interpretation of migration that these concepts facilitates and the discursive construction of belonging that follows from them. In the end of the chapter I introduce the discourse of "belonging as nationality", and I identify a set of discursive practices that equals belonging with nationality.

The thesis' 3rd chapter is the methods chapter. This chapter starts by describing the research-design and fieldwork. That part is important because it allows the reader some insight into how the data was collected and the effects this might have had on the data obtained. I present this part by giving an account of the different choice I did before and during my fieldwork. This way I can explain both why I made the choices I made and how the process might have affected the data gathering.

The next part of the chapter is considering the choices I did during the analysis. I describe how I went through with the analysis, and elaborate on some important decisions. At last I discuss the presentation of the findings, expanding on issues such as presenting the interviewees vs. the opinions of the researcher and securing the anonymity of the interviewees in the presentation. The chapter ends with a note on the credibility and transferability of the research findings.

Chapter 4 is titled *A Background on the Palestinians in Egypt*. This chapter starts with a history of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In this account I emphasizes issues such as Egypt's role in the conflict and Palestinian immigration to Egypt as a result of the conflict. This gives the reader an insight into the premises for the growth of a Palestinian community in Egypt. Continuing on this, the chapter expands on the present Palestinians in Egypt, and the role of the PLO-institutions in organizing them.

Chapter 5 is called *The Political construction of host-country and home-land*. The title is referring to the role of political considerations in describing and determining the relations of the Palestinians to both Egypt and Palestine. The chapter starts by discussing the relations of the

Palestinians to Egypt, as they are stated in Egyptian law and interpreted by my interviewees. The next part is discussing the relations of the Palestinians in Egypt to Palestine, and how these are affected by Israeli laws. The whole chapter builds on stories about how the Palestinians are treated in Egypt and when they try to return to Palestine. Central issues are those of citizenship, residence permits, work permits and education in Egypt, and the possibilities to visit or settle in Palestine.

The last analysis chapter is chapter 6, *Living in Between and the struggle for belonging*. This chapter concerns how my interviewees are using the discourse of "belonging as nationality" themselves. The chapter first looks into how my interviewees use the discourse to interpret their own experiences. Then it goes on to discuss the situations in which the interviewees prefer to use other discourses, either on the side of "belonging as nationality", or in direct opposition to it.

The conclusion of my thesis will go back to the research question. I will first present the findings of all the previous chapters, chapter by chapter. Then I will discuss how the findings from these chapters are contributing towards answering the research question. I will end my thesis with some remarks on the theoretical insight that can be gained from the analysis of the case and a few remarks on the possibilities to find a solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in light of my studies.

Chapter 2:

Theory

In order to make sense of the world we live in, we interpret it. We automatically interpret everything that happens to us within the limits of our prior knowledge, and our interpretations go on to shape both our knowledge and future events. In other words, everything that happens to us is adding to our general knowledge of the world, but we can also learn by observing or by being taught by others. When a specific interpretation of an event is shared by a group of people, that interpretation will be regarded as knowledge, and the knowledge will be shared by the whole group. If one person chooses another interpretation, she has to convince the other persons in the group that this interpretation is better than the one they previously believed in, or her interpretation will be regarded as false by the group. It will not achieve the status of knowledge before it is accepted by a majority of the group. In this way knowledge is socially constructed (Jørgensen & Phillips 1999, Hall 1997).

According to Hall (1997), we are depending upon representation to interpret the world, and thus create knowledge. A representation is a symbol that is used to represent something else, in the way the word apple is used to represent the physical item we have named apple. The word in itself does not have any of the characteristics of an apple. We cannot eat it, but we use it to think with and to communicate with other people. Discourse theory is describing how we use representations systematically, and how the systems of representations shape our thinking and interpretations. A discourse is a specific system of representations, and within a discourse certain interpretations and actions are made likely, while others seem impossible.

Within the nationalist discourse, people naturally belong in groups, and these groups belong to specific territories. The groups are permanent groups which share the same language, culture and history. If a new person comes to the territory of one national group, he does not share that language, culture and history, and cannot become a member of the group. The group belongs to the territory, but the new person does not, and can only stay there as a guest as long as he is accepted by the group.

In this chapter, I will first elaborate further on the theories of representations and discourses. Secondly I will use these theories to discuss the concepts of nationality, belonging, home-land and host-country. I will discuss both what others have been writing about these concepts, and how they together constitute a nationalist discourse. In my analysis I will discuss how this discourse is used within the case of a Palestinian community in Egypt.

Representations:

By representations we mean the way something is representing, or make us think about something else. For example our language is made up of words that are representing things, feelings, actions and so on. The words become symbols representing the things, actions and feelings, but not only words can be symbols. In our daily life we are surrounded by symbols of different kinds, like for example traffic lights, where the red and green lights are symbols telling us if we should stop or drive on. But representations can also mean that small and simple things can be symbols representing something much bigger, in the way that a small cross is often use as a symbol to represent the Christian religion (Hall 1997).

Symbols are directing attention to what they are representing, but they can also be used to hide things, because when you draw attention to one aspect of a case other aspects automatically fall into the shadow of that aspect. For example politicians often use words that are highlighting the positive aspects of their actions, thus hiding the negative (Fairclough 2003, Jørgensen & Phillips 1999). For example the difference between freedom fighters and terrorists is not so much about any difference in the fighter's methods as about who you are supporting. That is also why an organization can be seen as a terrorist organization at one point of time, and later be seen as freedom fighters, or the other way around. Think only about how the image of ANC changed from a terrorist organization (Byford 2002), to an organization whose leader won the Nobel peace prize after the fall of apartheid in South Africa in 1994.

One of the first scholars to explore the significance of language in representation was Saussure, who was a pioneer within linguistics. He named the symbols *signifiers* and the things they where representing *signified*, and he claimed that the relationship between the signifiers and the signified where completely arbitrary (Hall 1997). This can be seen by looking at different languages, which have different names for the same things. However the relationship between the different signifiers is not arbitrary, in fact the signifiers only get their meaning in relationship with other signifiers that together create a language system. Saussure called this system "*Langue*", and the use of language "*parole*". *Langue* is shared within a group of people, thus making *parole* possible. Just think about how communication with other people is depending on sharing their language, and how difficult it is to communicate with people that do not share your language (Jørgensen & Phillips 1999).

Later scholars have maintained big parts of Saussure's theories, but they have emphasized that, like *parole* is depending on *langue* for its existence, *langue* is also depending on *parole*. For a language to develop it is depending on the people using it, and it can also be changed through that use, but if people stop using a language it will die (Jørgensen & Phillips 1999). Because *parole* only

exists within specific contexts, the development of language is also happening within these contexts, and should be studied within the contexts. This is valid not only for language, but for all symbols and representations.

What Saussure called *langue* is relatively similar to what Hall (1997) terms *systems of representations*. In these systems, symbols are organized and classified according to each other much like signifiers is organized according to each other in Saussure's *langue*. The systems of representations then adjoin to make *conceptual maps* that we use to orientate with in order to interpret the symbols. According to Hall these maps are held by individuals, but they have big similarities that make us able to understand each other.

An important part of these systems are the way we classify the concepts within different categories. This is important in order to make us able to use them as effectively as possible. This automatic classification makes us able to build new knowledge on top of old knowledge, so that we do not have to learn everything from scratch each time we see something new. For example, when going into a shop where you have never been before, you will still be able to find most of the things you want, because you have classified items as belonging together, so that when you find one type of cold drinks, you know that you are likely to find other cold drinks nearby. When we classify something, we do it based on the characteristics of the thing, but not only on the characteristics it inhabits. We classify things just as much according to the characteristics they do not inhabit, and how they are different from other things (Hall 1997).

Hooks (2001) is concerned with how such categories affect the relationship between people. Just as we are putting things into categories, we are also putting people into categories according to their assumed characteristics. Hooks studied how white youths in Great Britain were building their own identity in relation to youths with other ethnic backgrounds. When we put people into categories in this way, we effectively group them together. And as with other categories, groups of people are defined just as much because of what they are not, as because of what they are. Singh (1999) is highlighting this by showing us how two groups of people might be seen as separate in one context, but in another context they are seen as just one group. For example a Scottish man might represent himself as different from an English man, but if a Scott and an Englishman are in a competition against a German, they would be likely to identify themselves as British so as to fall into the same category.

Because groups are socially constructed they are not eternal. On this background Jørgensen & Phillips (1999) are claiming that a group exists only when someone or something is representing the group. This should not be interpreted as saying that a group only exists when somebody is actively going out to represent the group or officially making a symbol to represent the group. We should rather understand representation as I have already described it, as the symbol that one person

thinks about when thinking about the group. In this way, when one person is thinking about some people as belonging to a group, they are already represented as a group, but for this representation to gain importance, the symbol have to be used and understood by more people.

Singh (1999) is identifying an effective way of constructing someone to belong to a group when he describes the representation of minorities that are common in Western media. If the media are commenting on someone belonging to an ethnic minority they are often mentioning their ethnicity, but if the person is belonging to an ethnic majority, it is not mentioned. Every time this happens ethnic minorities are consolidated into groups based on their ethnicity, while ethnic majorities are not grouped in this way. This might easily develop into what Singh describes as "*negative labelling*". For example, if every time a person belonging to an ethnic minority is committing a crime, his or her ethnicity is mentioned, that ethnicity might easily be associated with crime. In that way all the other aspects of this ethnicity is forgotten. However, when a person belonging to the majority is committing a crime, the crime will not be associated with the ethnic groups, simply because ethnicity in this case would not be mentioned.

Another form of labelling groups of people, in an often negative way, is through stereotypes. Hall (1997) is describing how representations of people, or groups of people, are often drawing on some characteristics that people that belong to a specific group is supposed to inhibit, and hiding the fact that those people also inhibit other characteristics. These stereotypes promote a very simplified picture of people, and can often be misleading. Hall is describing how these stereotypes where actively used by white Americans both in the period of slavery and during the upheavals following the civil rights movements in the 60-ties. According to him white people had placed all black people into a few stereotypes, and in that way they reduced the whole black culture to fit into those stereotypes. At the time when this was happening white people where the dominating group in their relations to black people and that is what made it possible for them to reduce black people in this way.

Said (1985) is looking at how dominance has affected science in the case of Orientalism. Orientalism used to be a popular branch of the social sciences for a long time, and it was collecting knowledge about the Orient. Said argues that this knowledge was heavily affected by the power relations at the time, where the western scholars were in a dominant position towards the subjects of their research, and that the research contributed to enhancing this domination. Hall (1997) is demonstrating how representations are constructed in a context where power relations play an important role, and Said is discussing the role of science in constructing these representations. This is a very important perspective to remember in all projects within the social sciences, because the project will always be a part of the construction of certain representations, and we have to be conscious about how these representations affect reality. This is especially important when people

are the focus of your study, because your findings can potentially have an impact on these people's lives in the future.

Loftsdottir (2008) is discussing a case where representations were consciously used for a political purpose. She has studied articles published in the Icelandic magazine "*Skirnir*" in the 18th century, and she found that most of the articles about Africa were describing Africans as primitive and peripheral. She argues that this was consciously done in order to compare them with Icelanders, thus showing the world that Iceland belonged within the European fellowship of developed countries even though it was a colony at that time. For this very same reason it created a lot of stir among Icelandic students in Denmark when a Danish museum wanted to exhibit Icelandic cultural items next to cultural items from African colonies.

Representations are necessary for us to be able to interpret the world, and to be able to think about it and speak about it, yet they are not neutral reflections of the world. Using different representations can alter the way we think about things and people, and thus alter our actions. Which representations that gain acceptance and validity is to some degree determined by the power relations between the proponents of different representations, and as such a dominant group may have the power to enforce representations that are beneficial to themselves upon subordinated groups. A common way of studying representations is through discourse analysis.

Discourses and discourse analysis

Jørgensen & Phillips (p. 9, my translation) is describing a discourse as: "*....a specific way of speaking about and understanding the world, or a part of it.*" With other words, a discourse is a specific system of representations. Discourse analysis is about analyzing how these discourses are developing, and the social consequences that follow from them. The starting point is that discourses, as systems of representations, are used to interpret reality. They are defining the borders between true and false, and they are making some actions and reactions seem viable, while others become irrelevant, or even unthinkable (Jørgensen & Phillips 1999).

Within a discourse there can be several possible subject positions and master signifiers. A subject position is a position an individual can have within a discourse that affects how the individual can act. Examples of subject positions within a discourse on visiting can, be the position of the guest or host. The discourse on visiting carries some expectations to both the host and the guest. A good host is supposed to make his guest feel comfortable, while the guest should never complain at the host, at least not while still being a guest. In this way the discourse places some actors in specific positions that limit what they can or cannot do and say. A master signifier is a subject position that is especially important through several discourses, but that takes on a specific meaning within each discourse. For example "man" and "woman" are two master signifiers that any

person has to relate to, but what it implies to be a man or a woman is determined within specific discourses. A discourse can construct a man as someone strong, active and providing for his family, and for someone to be accepted as a real man within that discourse, he has to inhibit those characteristics, while another discourse might construct "man" totally different. What is important is that everybody that falls into the category of being a man, has to relate to the construction of the man within the prevalent discourses of his environment (Jørgensen & Phillips 1999).

Another important concept within discourse analysis is metaphors. Metaphors are a way of comparing two signifiers, in order to transfer the meaning of one signifier to the other. This can have the effect of highlighting some of the characteristics of a signifier and hiding others (Jørgensen & Phillips 1999). An example of a very effective use of a specific metaphor happened this summer in Norway, when the national authorities wanted to build a new line for transmission of electric power through the Hardangerfjord. This area is famous for its beautiful scenery and it is popular destination for tourists. The use of the word "monster mast" to describe parts of the lines highlighted specific qualities about the project. The masts were seen as huge and ugly and destroying for the local environment and communities, and at the time I was writing this thesis the national authorities had been forced to take back its decision and revise the issue again.

In addition to separate discourses, discourse analysis is operating with discourse orders, which are the order of all the different discourses that are in use in a specific situation (Jørgensen & Phillips). Much used examples of discourse orders are those existing within institutions, like for example hospitals, but discourse orders can also be interpreted to be the order of discourses within any constructed case, like for example a scientific case which is defined by the researcher for a specific purpose. The discourses within a discourse order are often contradicting each other, because they are competing ways of interpreting the reality of the situation. They can be contradicting because they have different starting points, and are interpreting reality from different perspectives, or because they are used by different interests. Discourse orders are important analytical tools, because they make it possible to understand the complexity of the discourses that are always in play in any given situation.

Laclau and Mouffe were working with post-structuralist discourse theory to analyze changes in the discourse orders. Where structuralist cannot analyze change, this is possible for post-structuralists. This is because structuralists are concerned only with langue, while post-structuralists also analyze parole. Laclau and Mouffe used the term articulation to analyze the use of different discourses within a discourse order. This term implies that several elements are combined through active use of language. This makes it possible to analyze change, because we can analyze the way in which the elements are combined. We can check if there are any new, uncommon combinations,

and we can check if elements are combined within a discourse, across several discourses within the same discourse order, or even across several discourse orders. When elements are combined from several discourses or discourse orders, this is likely to create change, because new elements are brought together (Jørgensen & Phillips 1999). As an example of how this works, people from an NGO are likely to use elements from discourses that are much used within that NGO. Yet they also have the possibility to use elements from discourses that are common in other spheres, like for example private business. If using elements from outside the usual discourse order becomes common the discourse order will be changed.

At any given time, a discourse can achieve a hegemonic status. When a discourse becomes hegemonic, it is seen as a true and objective description of the world, and any descriptions that are in conflict with the hegemonic discourse are seen as false or even impossible. However hegemony is never complete and can only survive for a limited period of time. By combining elements in new ways discourses are changed and so hegemony can be broken. This can happen as a result of changing times without, but it can also happen as a result of a conscious process of deconstruction. Because discourses are socially constructed, they can also be deconstructed to reveal other possibilities, and when other possibilities are revealed it becomes possible to work politically in order to change the status of the discourses and break the hegemony (Jørgensen & Phillips 1999).

Power is the ability to change the statuses of specific discourses, either to make some discourses hegemonic or to make others unthinkable. It can be constructive, because it creates order. If there were no such thing as power, it would be impossible to decide which discourse to believe in. There would be no discourse-orders, but rather discursive chaos which would make it impossible for people to understand each other and cooperate. By making some discourses more likely power draws people in the same direction so as to facilitate cooperation. But power can also be negative through oppression of alternative ways of thinking. Positive and negative power always come together, because the production of order can never happen within the oppression of some alternatives (Jørgensen & Phillips 1999).

When the power relationship between two groups is very uneven, it becomes possible for one group to dominate over the other, and to impose its own will and its own discourses. By using their power the dominant group can punish subordinates for opposing them or acting outside of the discourse, and they can reward them for cooperating, but they are only able to do so effectively as long as they know what the subordinates are doing. This is the background for what Scott (1990) terms public and hidden transcripts.

The public transcript is what is said by both the dominating group and the subordinates when they are in contact with each other. Because the subordinates always face the prospect of

being punished or rewarded by the dominating group, they will always try to please them. In other words they will do what they believe the dominating group want them to do as long as any members of the dominating group are present. These actions will almost always confirm the existing discourses and power relationships. In the same way the dominants will guard their actions when they are observed by the subordinates, so that they always act in order with the discourse that gives them their power. For example, if the power of the dominants derives from their strength, they have to be very careful not to show any weakness towards the subordinates (Scott 1990).

The hidden transcript consists of what is said and done when no members from the opposite group will be able to know about it. When no members of the dominant group are present, the subordinates do not have to conform to their discourses. They can create their own discourses that can be directly contradicting the discourses of the dominating group, as long as the dominating group will not know about it. In the same way the members of the dominating group can relax without having to worry about acting in order with the discourse, as long as no members of the subordinate group are present. In order for hidden transcripts to develop and evolve, the groups have to have some secure social spaces where they can speak and act without being observed by the other group (Scott 1990).

The public transcript can be slightly more conforming to the hegemonic discourse than the hidden transcript, or the hidden transcript can be totally different from and in direct conflict with the public transcript, or it can be somewhere in between. The more uneven the power-relations are, the more likely it is that the public transcript and the hidden transcript will be totally different. According to Scott (1990), the border between the hidden and public transcript will always be contested no matter if the difference in power is big or small. The dominating group will try to make the public transcript as confirming of their power as possible, while the subordinates will try to gain more freedom to express their own views.

For a researcher, it is important to remember that the public transcript is not the whole story. It is a bad guide to the opinions of the subordinates, because they will only say what they believe the dominating group wants to hear (Scott 1990). Yet it might be difficult to gain access to the hidden transcript, because it requires a lot of trust on the behalf of the researcher. If a relationship of trust with the subordinates cannot be established, or can only be partially established, it can be very difficult to access the opinions of the subordinates, but one way would be to look for contradictions within the statements from the same interviewee. When someone is contradicting herself, she might be drawing on a mix of the public and hidden transcripts, and as such the contradictions might be a hint that the public transcript is significantly different from the hidden one.

The hidden and public transcripts represents different discourses. They are systems of

representations that facilitate some interpretations and make other interpretations unlikely or impossible. By analyzing discourses, we can deconstruct them and be able to see alternatives that were previously hidden. Analyzing the use of discourses can also be useful in order to interpret existing power relationships within a case, and when doing a case analysis, it is important to remember that what is said and done in the open is not necessarily representative for the whole case, because power-relations can make people disguise their real opinions.

Nationalism

The national discourse is a specific way of giving meaning to the world, through dividing it in cultural or territorial "islands". Today nations exist as collections of institutions and practices, emotional gathering points and important discursive concepts. They can be interpreted as imagined communities that make people feel that they have something in common, or some knowledge of each other, even though the communities are too large to make any personal contact possible. The national groups are constituted through representations of the national and the use of symbols such as flags, national anthems, national cuisines, folkloric culture and so on. There are two different ways of thinking around the basis for the national community, and they are often used simultaneously (Jørgensen & Phillips 1999).

The first way to think about the nation is like a cultural unit, where every member has something in common based on their culture. They share the same history, language and culture across the whole nation and because of this, someone from another nation cannot become a member of a new nation, just by moving to its territory. The newcomer would not share the history, language and culture that constitutes the nation, thus he should not be considered a member. This way of thinking about what a nation is presumes that language, culture and history are homogenous units that exist across the whole of the nation (Jørgensen & Phillips 1999).

The second way of thinking about nation, however, sees it as a territorial unit, where the nation is closely bound to the territories where it exist, and the what holds the members of the community together is their bounds to the land. In this version someone can become a member of the nation through proving their bounds to the land, even though this is usually a long process (Jørgensen & Phillips 1999).

The nation, as all other groups, consists of its members, but to define who is belonging to a nation is not as easy. If you think about the nation as a cultural unit, then the membership to the nation is inherited from parents to children, together with the culture, history and language of that nation. This is sometimes referred to as *Jus Sanguinis*. If you see the nation as a territorial unit however, then membership to the nation is granted upon the bounds of the individual to the land, usually in terms of residence. This is referred to as *Jus Soli* (David 2000).

As mentioned the two perspectives on the nation is often mixed together. They are two different discourses, that both belong to the discourse order of the nation, and they are both used, and often mixed, when there is talk about the nation. This also implies that membership to the nation is granted both through inheritance and through belonging to the territory. Defining who belongs to the nation is an ongoing social process that is always changed by the contests in the discourse order, and so one person cannot decide whether to be a member of a nation or not, even though she can do some efforts to be represent herself as a member or non-member (Jørgensen & Phillips 1999).

As a discursive concept, nationality has some characteristics, as described above, but in addition to what defines nationality as such, each nation is defined by the way it is different from other nations. For example Norwegians are considered, by themselves, as different from the Danish because they are good at skiing, while the Danish are not. Because of the way a nation is defined by being different from another nation, feelings of being strange and different might easily be interpreted in a nationalist discourse as arising from differences in cultures between different nations. Jørgensen & Phillips (1999) gives an example of a British woman on a trip to Denmark that noticed that many of the Danish people she visited had their showers in the kitchen. Because she had not seen this before, she interpreted it as something specifically Danish. She did this because the nationalist discourse is often used to explain differences, so it came to her mind when she experienced something different, but her experiences could just as well be described as a class phenomenon, or just a coincident.

Three metaphors are commonly used to speak about nationality. The first is of the nation as an extended family. This is among other things expressed through the way we talk about earlier members of the nation as our forefathers, and the language of our own nation as our mother tongue. Through this metaphor, the national is constructed as something that is always continuing through the new children of the kin. It also emphasizes that nation, just as family, is something one is born into, not something for the individual to choose whether or not to be a member of. The second metaphor is the metaphor of the nation as a tree. In the same way as trees belong in specific places, so it is implied that members of a nation belongs in the nation, and if they leave the nation, they will be affected by a lack of roots. Within this metaphor, migration becomes deeply problematic and complicated. Just as moving a tree comes with a great risk of damage to the tree, moving out of the national home comes with great risks of danger to the migrant. When they are moving, they are in danger of losing their roots and they will have problems settling down in their new place. This metaphor is often used to explain problems of integrating migrants from vastly different cultures than our own, and can often conceal other problems, such as discrimination and marginalization that keeps the migrants from integrating. The third metaphor is the one of the nation as an individual,

which we use when we speak about the birth of a nation, or its age. An individual is easy to conceive of, it has clear borders and it is one homogenous unit without inner differences. Through this metaphor it becomes possible to hide differences within the nation, and give validity to a statement through the use of phrases such as “The nation wishes...”, or “The nation has decided...” (Jørgensen & Phillips 1999).

The national discourse can never fit the world perfectly. There will always be people that do not feel like they belong to any nation or fail to be recognized as members of a nation, as well as people that feel a sense of belonging to several nations. However this is not an issue in the national discourse. As most other discourses it includes the things that fit in, and excludes all issues that do not fit. This is in the nature of discourses, because discourses operate with certain concepts, and then the world is described in such a way that it fits the discourse. But a discourse will never be the only one on the field, and when one discourse is found incapable of explaining a phenomenon, another discourse will be used. In this way discourses develop to fit an ever changing world. Thus, the national discourse is only one of many discourses that can be used to describe and interpret the world of nation-states. Historically it has only existed for a few centuries, and most likely it will cease to exist in the near or distant future.

The history of the nation:

During the last few centuries, the national discourse has evolved into becoming a hegemonic discourse. It has been naturalized as an objective truth, and as a consequence, the national division of the world is seen as something natural, and unchangeable (Jørgensen & Phillips 1999).

The term nation is old, but its use has not always been similar to how it is used today. According to Calhoun (1997, p. 9):

“The term “nation” is old, but before the modern era, it meant only people linked by place of birth and culture. It signalled nothing about the relationship of such identity to larger or smaller groupings, neither did it carry clear political connotations.”

In this context it makes sense to discuss the history of the nation, and different theories about how the nation came into being.

According to primordial theories, nations have always existed. All individuals have a set of elemental affiliations, with deep historical roots. This perspective is academically outdated, but it is still an important part of the national discourses outside of the universities. According to these theories, a group of people, or a nation, can be understood on the basis of common characteristics. These nations are developing over time, but they have always existed in one form or another (Stokke 1999).

According to Kellas (1998) the opposite of primordialism is contextualism where nations are seen as products of particular economic and social circumstances. He (p.45) claims that: *"...we can look for an explanation for the rise of nationalism in the developments which have taken place in politics, in the economy and in culture."*

But there are many different theories as to how the modern nations have developed. One theorist that is very close to primordialism is Anthony Smith. He claims that nations have developed from what he calls *ethnie*. These *ethnie* are primordial groups of people which shares a loyalty to the groups based on their ethnicity. For Smith (in Kellas 1998 p. 60)

"modern nations simply extend, deepen and streamline the ways in which members of *ethnie* associated and communicated. They do not introduce startlingly novel elements, or change the goals of human association and communication."

However for the *ethnie* to develop into nations, modernism was a necessity. It was the decline of religion, the rise of the state and industrial economy that made it possible to mobilize and politicize the *ethnie* into the nation. But for Smith the essence of the nations is the same as the essence of the *ethnie*, and therefore tradition and pre-modern culture, national myths and old languages are the real substance of nationalism (Kellas 1998).

Ernst Gellner does not agree with this. He is focusing on the primacy of material conditions in shaping political thought and social change, and he claims that nations are communities that were constructed in order to aid the transition into industrial societies. These societies require particular forms of polity and culture for economic growth to occur. A homogeneous society with an educational system for all is necessary to train workers and managers for the industry, and provide all with a common high culture. A common language is necessary to facilitate for mobility and division of labour. Nationalism achieved its success because it was appropriate for the needs of the time. However Gellner does not explain the emotional appeal of the nation (Kellas 1998).

A theorist that is focusing on the emotional appeal of the nation is Benedict Anderson. He sees nations as imagined communities, that are facilitated by commercial printing on a wide spread scale, which Anderson calls printing-capitalism. This has two main functions. Printing made it possible to distribute books to big masses of people, and in this way it made it commercially viable to translate books into several languages. When languages went from oral to written, they were standardized within the boundaries of the nation, creating common languages with clear boundaries. The second function of printing also has to do with the distribution of books to more people. When the books were distributed, so were the stories in the books, and this made it possible to spread the story of the nation. However Anderson also holds up some other factors that where necessary for

nationalism to emerge, such as the exploration of the world, and the exchange of the divine rights of the king for rule by the people (Kellas 1998).

The different theories of the history of the nation illustrate that nation is a contested concept. The term can be interpreted differently within different discourses, for example as a way of organizing institutions or as imagined communities in which we feel connected to each other because of the emotional appeal of the national. Within the nationalist discourse the nation is interpreted closer to the primordial understanding that is presented here. Nations are understood as naturally given units that should be decisive in choosing how to organize the society. This understanding of the nation implies a connection between the nation and the state, where the state is a national institution set to govern the national territories.

Nation and state

According to Jørgensen & Phillips (1999), the nation-state is seen as a limited territory that is inhabited by a linguistically and culturally homogenous people, with the right to supremacy over their own territory. The national idea is an interpretation of the world as naturally divided in nation-states. All land, except for the poles, are, and should be, the territory of a nation-state, and it can only belong to one such at a time.

The discourse about the nation-state plays a vitally important role in today's society. Since it began to take shape in the 18th century, the discourse have been more and more hegemonic, and as a result, today's world is mainly arranged in nation-states, or attempts as such, and the most important international institutions are those based on nation-states.

Because of the hegemonic status of the nation-state in the national discourse order, the two concepts of nation and state are often mixed together, and used interchangeably. However I will argue that there is a difference between the two, and that they should be kept separately. A state is a set of institutions used to govern a limited territory, whereas a nation is a much vaguer concept, as discussed above. In the nation-state, the territory that is governed by the state should ideally be exactly the same territory that is inhabited by the nation, and the culture of the nations, and the institutions of the state become so overlapping that they are difficult to keep apart. However, not all states in the world are nation-states, and not all nations have their own states. Secondly, because of increased amount of voluntary and forced migration more and more people often belong to a different nation than the prevailing nation in the state in which they are living.

Citizenship and nationality:

Citizenship can be compared to membership, in that it gives rights and duties to the holder. This includes right to private ownership, right to basic social services, and duties such as paying taxes

and following laws. Butenschon (2000) is separating between three forms of citizenship. Civil citizenship means that you are accepted as a part of the community, you have to pay taxes, and are guaranteed legal justice. Political citizenship implies a right to have a hand in political decisions, for example through democratic elections. Social citizenship gives the right to social security and welfare services.

Since the French revolution, political citizenship has been an important part of the citizenship concept. Before the revolution, the power to rule the country, according to the hegemonic discourse, was granted the king directly from God, and opposing the king was synonymous with opposing God. But the revolution questioned this, and said that the power to rule the country should be given by the inhabitants of the country, through elections where all citizens should be able to participate. In the 18th and 19th century, citizenship was reserved for a small elite, but throughout the centuries, it has been broadened to include new groups, and modern citizenship is supposed to include all the inhabitants of the state (Faulks 2000).

Just as the concept of membership implies that the holder is a member of the national group, the concept of citizenship has a similar relation to the state. Just as the two terms nation and state are often used interchangeable, citizenship is often used interchangeable with nationality, referring both to the state and the nation. However, as I argued that there is a need to distinguish between nation and state, it follows that it is necessary to distinguish between membership to the state and membership to the nation. I shall therefore use the term nationality to refer to membership of the nation, and citizenship to refer to membership of the state.

Home-land, host-country, nationality and belonging:

An important part of the nationality-discourse is the idea that people have a homeland where they have a natural belonging. For most people the homeland is the land where they were born and grew up, and often they are living in the same country all their lives. Thus homeland and the country where they are living is the same. However this is not the case for all. Migration has always existed, and migration over big distances is becoming more and more common with increased travelling opportunities. Many people move to another country for a limited period of time, and have continued strong feeling of their country of birth as their homeland. But in the nationalist discourse, the country of birth remains the homeland, even though the individual has no plans of returning, or begins to feel more at home in the country of residence. Even when migrants have children, the parent's country of birth is often referred to as the homeland of the children. These children sometimes grow up without ever visiting their "home-land", and most of them develop a strong sense of belonging in the country where they live. Yet according to the nationalist discourse they belong in the "home-land", and cannot be fully accepted residents of the countries where they live

without attaining the nationality.

Another important part of the nationalist discourse is the concept of host-country. When migrants first arrive in a new country, they are often referred to as guests, and the country they arrive in as their host-country. This makes the stay seem temporary, the immigrants become visitors that are only in the host-country for a short visit. However when immigrants move to a new country to stay there permanently, this idea of a home and host-country might have big implications on their lives in their new country.

When this happens, the immigrants are made permanent visitors, and often end up in what Chan (2005) describes as liminality. They are caught in between the fact that they are unable or unwilling to return to their home-country, and that they are not accepted as belonging in their new country. According to Chan (2005, p. 347-348):

“They are subjected to the immigration policy, the population categories, and various related policies imposed by the host state and its institutions. With respect to the homeland, migrants are at the so-called periphery, consuming media products that originate from the homeland or so-called centre which tend to focus on the identities and practices of those who have not left home.”

At the same time they are not fully accepted in the host-country, and they realize that they are different from the people that stayed behind in their homeland. They are living in the past in the homeland, and suffer incomplete integration into the host society. Depending on the immigrants and the host-country, this can go on for several generations.

When people are caught in this kind of liminality imagining the homeland become important in the construction of their national identity. “*Their collective identity is defined by their relationship to, and continual support for, the homeland*” (Chan 2005, s.337). They maintain myths and memories about their homeland because they realize that they cannot be fully accepted by the host-country, and because they often long to return to the homeland. They show solidarity with each other based on their place of origin and their marginal places in the host societies.

Diaspora

Diaspora is a term that is often used about mass-settlements of people outside of their home-land. It refers to people from one specific place being scattered around many different places, as a result of voluntary or forced mass-movements. Diaspora is a much used, but slightly diffuse term. It carries a strong historical reference to the Jewish diaspora, yet it has been used to describe many other exile populations. According to Peteet (2007), the term is in danger of becoming semantically overloaded, and she is discussing some key characteristics that should be present in an exile population in order to term it a diaspora. In this context, it is not as important to define what a diaspora is, but rather how the term can be used to better our understanding of identity formation in

exile. The concept of home-land is important to many exile communities, and these might uphold connections to the homeland and other communities within the same diaspora, through an elite, and communal institutions. These institutions are important for identity formation, because they have power over the discourse about the community and the home-land. The dream of return and the communal memory of the homeland are usually important, and the institutions sit on important information, especially with regard to the collective memory. Being a part of a diaspora community can become very important for persons that are unable to be fully accepted as a part of the host-country, because it give them a place to show solidarity with each other. As a result it can often become important to conform to the discourse of the institutions in order to be accepted, and the institutions can be very powerful in regard to identity formation, even down to the individual level.

Home-land and host-country are important concepts in the diaspora, and they are important for the relations of diasporic populations to the land where they are living and the lands they have left. Because of the emphasis on the home-country, it can be difficult to settle in a new country. In this way nationality becomes very important in determining where a person belongs. In the analysis I am referring to a discourse of "belonging as nationality" as a collection of discursive practices that constructs belonging as equal to nationality. Within this discourse a person should ideally live in the country where she has her national roots. In other words a persons home-land is determined by her nationality, and that is where she belongs. Within this discourse, if a person resides outside her home-land, the country she lives in is constructed as her host-country. She can never be at home there or belong there, but she is allowed to stay there as a guest.

If this understanding of belonging to the nation is combined with a mixing of nationality and citizenship, the consequences for migrants are even bigger. If a migrants national homeland is seen as something fixed from birth, depending on the nationality the person was born into, then the nationality cannot be changed. In this way nationality becomes something that is fixed on a person for every. And if citizenship is consequently mixed up with nationality, then it becomes impossible to changes one's citizenship. When this understanding prevails, a person can be living in a country for decades without being able to obtain the citizenship, and if a couple consisting of two such persons have children, their children will no be able to obtain the citizenship either.

In this way, discourses can have tremendous impacts upon people's lives, and the discourse of "belonging as nationality" can effectively block people not only from complete integration in a country, but from every opportunity to obtain citizenship. In my thesis I will explore the case of a Palestinians community in Cairo, trying to manage their lives in the liminality between Egypt and Palestine. The community has its own institution connected to their homeland, and the one thing that binds them together is that they all identify themselves as Palestinians and their nationality play

an important part in their lives. Many of those people are unable to obtain Egyptian citizenship even though their families have been living in Egypt for several generations. Their experiences of living in liminality between Palestine and Egypt are important for the community, and I will analyze how they are using the discourse of "belonging as nationality" to interpret these experiences

Chapter 3:

Methods

The use of research method is very important for the quality of any research. Choosing appropriate methods can be decisive for the outcome of the research. Describing the choices done in regards to methods is important in order to enable the readers to judge the quality of the research as well as the basis for the interpretations that are presented in the analysis. In this chapter I will discuss my own choices with a heavy emphasis on the experiences from the work with the thesis.

The chapter starts with some remarks on research design. I had decided right from the beginning to use qualitative methods with a focus on representations and discourses, but the rest of the research design was made along the way. In the following, I am careful to describe the final research design, as well as the process that lead to it. This part includes all the considerations I did during the fieldwork, as I consider those an integral part of my research design. The choice of interviewees as well as interview questions, overcoming language problems and being present in the community all had a decisive impact on the data material gathered.

The second part of the chapter is about the analysis. This part describes all the steps I took while working on the analysis, and considerations around the presentation. The chapter ends with a few notes on the transferability and credibility of the findings.

Research design

According to Thagaard (2009), qualitative approaches make it possible to gain an understanding of social phenomena, on the basis of in-depth data about the people and situations that are studied. It also makes it possible to interpret processes and meaning that cannot be measured quantitatively. When I chose my methods both of those factors were important, as my study is both about social phenomena and immeasurable sizes.

Representations are phenomena that are difficult to measure quantitatively. In quantitative studies, the researcher has to make up her own categories before entering the field, and this makes it difficult to be able to study much more than those categories. Qualitative methods, however, retain the necessary openness and flexibility to be able to go behind the researchers categories and give the interviewees opportunities to present their own representations. The issue of my study is also one of which most of the interviewees had strong personal opinions, and it was very important for me to give the interviewees room to express these opinions freely.

The issues in focus for my thesis has been very important for my research design. From the

start of the work with my thesis, I knew that I wanted a discursive perspective on my work. The winter of 2008-09 I decided that I wanted to work with Palestine. At this time the ongoing Gaza-war caught the worlds attention. There were big demonstrations all over the world, including Oslo, and the scale of the demonstrations in Oslo, together with the reports on the cruelty of the war made a big impression on me. At first I wanted to do some research about the demonstrations in Norway, but after some more thinking I decided on another focus. When I started reading more about Israel, I found out that the concept of nationality plays a very important role in the conflict. I read about how the Israeli law is differentiating between people of different nationalities even among people with Israeli citizenship, and I read about the different types of identity documents that were given to Palestinians inside and outside Palestine. This made me interested in the construction of national identity and citizenship in the Palestinian case, both how the Israeli law used these terms and how the Palestinians used them themselves. I started checking out the possibilities for doing fieldwork in the West Bank, but I soon realized that that would be impractical, and at the same time I started running out of time. I have previously been studying in Egypt, and thus I knew that I would be comfortable living in Cairo, something that would make it easier to focus on my research during the fieldwork. I started reading more about Palestinians in Egypt, and what makes them different from Palestinians in other countries. In Egypt the Palestinians do not live in refugee camps, like in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. They live dispersed among Egyptians, and live their lives very much like Egyptian, yet they are constituted as a separate group from Egyptians. When I learned that many Palestinians families have lived in Egypt for several generations without receiving Egyptian citizenship, I decided that I wanted to learn more about what it was that made this group Palestinian. Why could they not get Egyptian citizenship, and how is this affecting their lives?

A few weeks after this, I was on my way to Egypt. I was going to stay there for two months, and in that time I was going to conduct my fieldwork.. At this time I did not have a research question or a complete research design, but I had already done some studies on representations, discourses, nationality and citizenship. Based on this I build a theoretical framework for my studies, and thus I knew what I wanted to learn from my fieldwork.

I wanted to know what nationality meant to Palestinians in Egypt, how it affected their lives, and how they used the term themselves. And I wanted to know what I meant to them not to have Egyptian citizenship. The important thing was not to have knowledge of as many Palestinians as possible, but rather to have detailed knowledge about the experiences of a few of them. This detailed knowledge could tell me much more about how they experienced their own situation and how they related to the discourses that were used to interpret it. Because of this I decided to do in-depth, semi-structured interviews with a small group of Palestinians living in Cairo.

Qualitative studies are appropriate for studying issues where there are few prior studies, because such studies require openness and flexibility. They can range from studies which begin with precise research questions, to studies that begin with a very vague theme and develops as the researcher gains more data (Thagaard 2009).

Not many studies having been carried through on Palestinians in Egypt, and most of them are relatively old. Of the newer works ElAbed's (2009) study of the livelihood of Palestinians in Egypt is the most important. I have used this study a lot in my own work, yet it is a description of the Palestinian's livelihood, and not an interpretation of their experiences of nationality. The only work I could find on the nationality of Palestinians in Egypt was a thesis by Ismail (2007). Even though this thesis gave me important inspiration during my fieldwork, it had a totally different focus than my own. Because of the lack of prior knowledge on my theme, I had only very vague ideas about what I would find. For this reason it was difficult to make a complete research design with a clear research question before going into the field. Setting to strict boundaries for my research before conducting fieldwork would have made it much more difficult to be open to new findings. I was depending upon my first weeks in the field to give more direction to my fieldwork, because during that time I would be able to gain a better insight into some key issues.

Because of the lack of a clear research question and complete research design, I could not ask my questions directly related to the research question. I was more concerned with gaining as much general knowledge of the area as possible. Even though this left me with a lot of information that was not directly relevant, and maybe even got me less directly relevant information, it has proved to be an advantage for my studies. It allowed me to focus on what the interviewees were emphasizing, and be open to issues I might not have thought about myself. In addition, the questions I asked were heavily influenced by my relations to the interviewees. I adjusted my questions both to the interviewee's reactions and to the context where the interviews were conducted. I will continue by discussing the questions I asked during my interviewees, and the possibilities to ask other questions later in the analysis, but first I will make some remarks to the choice of methods for my study.

Case study:

A basic principle in social constructivism is that meaning only exists where it is socially constructed. The world's existence is not dependent on human interpretation, but in order to understand the world, in such a way that it becomes a meaningful surrounding for our own lives, we need to interpret it. This interpretation might be different from one place to another, and from one group of people to another. Jørgensen & Phillips (1999) states that science is not representing any

objective, everlasting truths. Reality is only available to us through our own interpretation of it, and this interpretation again is dependent on the context in which it is happening. A case can be a good context for studying the interpretations that are prevalent within that context.

A case, according to Thagaard (2009), is an empirically limited unit, where phenomena can be studied in their natural context within a study based on several sources. When I first arrived in Egypt, my case was simply the Palestinian community in Egypt. But it soon became evident that this was not a possible choice of a case, because the Palestinian community in Egypt is difficult to understand as one unit. There is a huge diversity within the community, and it has very diffuse limits, and because of this I would not have been able to get a sample of interviewees that could provide a good basis for my analysis, and I would not have known the limits of my case. I will discuss both of these claims further in chapter 4, but here it suffices to say that Palestinians in Egypt are difficult to find, because of their similarity with Egyptians, and it is even difficult to define who is a Palestinian and who is an Egyptian, because of the diffuse boundaries between the two.

In the beginning of my fieldwork I was introduced to the General Union for Palestinian Women (GUPWom) in Cairo. The union is running a choir called the Choral Abd ElShams which consists of young Palestinians that gather to sing Palestinian folk songs and learning about Palestine. This choir, together with a similar group called AlFalluja folkloric group made up the core of my case. In addition I interviewed a few from the GUPWom and other PLO-institutions in Cairo, because these people had a distinct impact on the case. Common for all my interviewees was that they were conscious of their Palestinian nationality. They all regarded it as important for them to maintain their Palestinian identity and they all had opinions about how this was affecting them. Because of this affection towards Palestine, they were also interested in the developments of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. This was important for me, because it meant that they were interested in the issues that were in focus for my study. Thus they would be able to provide me with relevant information, they would experience my questions as relevant for their lives, and they were likely to take an interest in my study. This also made it possible for the interviewees to influence my studies more, thus making them even more relevant and interesting, opening my eyes to issues I would not be able to see on my own.

The sources I use in my study are mainly the data from my interviews, but I also use some secondary sources, primarily ElAbed's (2009) study on the livelihood of Palestinians in Egypt. This study is concerned with all the Egyptian rules and institutions Palestinians in Egypt that are affecting the lives of Palestinians in Egypt, and so it helps me to understand the institutions and laws that are shaping the context around my case.

The interviews

The interviews are in-depth interviews, and I have spoken with each interviewee for between 30 minutes and 2 hours, depending on how much the interviewee had to say. I have used relatively unstructured interviews, in order to give my interviewees as much freedom as possible to bring up issues that were important to them. At the same time I had an interview guide with a set of standard questions which all my interviewees answered, either through their stories, or directly prompted by me.

When finding my interviewees I started out from General Union for Palestinian Women. I was introduced to the union by Amal who is in charge of recruiting new members to the union. She told me about the union, and invited me to attend a celebration where many of their members would be present. There I was introduced to more people, and made appointments for interviews with some of them. Later I was invited to another event where I was introduced to more interviewees. I also used the snowball method, asking my interviewees about other possible interviewees. This way my interviewees consisted of several groups, and I believe that they together gave me a good understanding of my case.

The first group consisted of 6 young people who were members of the Palestinian folkloric groups Choral Abbed ElShams and AlFalluja. Those were young people from very different backgrounds, but had their interest for Palestine and Palestinian traditions in common. They were all of Palestinian descent, and some of them had Egyptian citizenship, while others did not. These people were telling me about their own lives and experiences.

The second group consisted of 3 employees and volunteers in the General Union for Palestinian Women. These people devoted a lot of time to the union, and were key persons in the daily operations of the union. These people had a lot of experiences in common with the first group, and they were also telling me more about the union.

The third group consisted of other key persons within the PLO-institutions in Cairo. This group was including Mr. Yusuf ElNemnem, head of the General Union for Palestinian Workers in Cairo, Mai Arif, head of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society's Cairo branch, Mohammad Salem, previous governor of Gaza City under the Fatah Authorities, now retired and living in Cairo, and two employees at the Palestinian embassy in Cairo. This group consisted of people that were representing the official views of these institutions, and their life experiences were vastly different from those in the first groups.

During my first days in Cairo, I spent a lot of time working on my interview guide. It was important for me that the questions seemed sensible for my interviewees, and gave them opportunities to tell their stories, at the same time as they gave me the information I needed. This was difficult in the

beginning, because I tended to make the questions to directly related to my thesis, and thus difficult for my interviewees to understand. But after using some time phrasing and rephrasing the questions, my interviewees were able to answer them in a very satisfactory way. (For a review on the interview guide, see appendix 1.)

Another challenge was making the questions open so that my interviewees could be able to tell their stories, at the same time as they were helping them to start their answers. I solved this by making very open questions, and then preparing a set of follow up questions for those who was not able to answer the more general questions. Depending on the settings for the interviews, they ranged from relatively set interviews where I asked my questions and the interviewees answered, to interviews where the interviewees told their stories, and I asked follow up questions directly related to their stories, and then used the interview-guide as a checklist to make sure that I got the necessary information. I found the interviews that were closer to the last scenario more fulfilling, because they made the interview situation more relaxed and comfortable both for me and the interviewees, and because it made the interviewees talk more about things I had not thought about asking, thus opening my eyes for new perspectives. This tended to happen more and more towards the end of my fieldwork, and I believe there are two explanations to that. Firstly, I believe that I became a better interviewer towards the end of my fieldwork. I became more comfortable in the interview situation, and I got more used to asking questions. In the end, I did not rely so much on the interview guide anymore. Secondly the interviewees had seen me around, and knew more about my project, and had possibly also talked with other interviewees about the interviews before meeting me. Thus they became more comfortable in the situation, possibly starting to be more trusting of me and my intentions.

Another important aspect with having more conversational-like interviews, was that I were able to guide the interviewees into an issue, and at the same time react to their response, so that I did not push them to speak about things they were uncomfortable speaking about. This was very important in my interviews for two reasons. Firstly because some of the issues we were talking about reminded my interviewees of difficulties in their lives, and for some were difficult to speak about. Secondly, because Egypt is a country with heavy political censorship, where people can risk punishment by the government for having the wrong political opinions. Many people in the Palestinian community in Egypt have previously experienced problems with the government because of their opinions (ElAbed 2009), and there was a clear unwillingness among many towards speaking about the government or politically related issues. Pushing too much on, or going to directly into, sensitive issues could easily have made an awkward situation during the interview, as well as making my interviewees doubt my intentions. Using a conversational method made it possible to come close to these issues without going too far.

Several other factors could also have affected the information I gained during my interviews. Among them, the researcher should always reflect on her own positionality, and the effect this has on the interview situation. This is affected by the researcher's personal qualities, as well as characteristics such as sex, age and background. We can never know exactly how the information gained during the interview is affected by the interviewees' relations to the researcher. The descriptions the interviewee is giving can also be affected by how she wants to present herself to the researcher (Thagaard 2009). In my thesis this perspective is very important, because what the interviewees chose to tell me reveal a lot about how they are constructing their identities, and who they want to be. Yet it is also reflecting the realities of their lives, because the interviewees were getting the stories they were telling me from their own life. As a researcher I have no reason to believe that the interviewees made up fake stories, but rather that they selected information based on how they understand their own lives.

During some of the interviews, other people from the community were present. In these cases I believe the interviewees did not speak as freely as they would have done if the other persons had not been there, and thus I might have missed some information. However this was difficult to avoid, and I judged it better to complete the interviews and get the information I could, than not doing the interviews at all. From the interview situation I cannot find any reason to believe that the information I got during the interviews were significantly altered because of the presence of other persons, except that some information might have been held back in order not to reveal conflicting opinions.

I was recording most of the interviews, and I always asked permission to record in front of the interview. I explained that this would allow me to focus more on the interview, and to remember their information more correctly. All of my interviewees were understanding of that, and none of them seemed to care very much about the recorder.

Language issues were a challenge during the fieldwork. None of the interviewees had English as their mother tongue, and their English skills were very variable. I did not want English skills to be an issue when choosing my interviewees, because this would have made me unable to reach an important group of interviewees.

Due to earlier studies I knew some Arabic before I entered the field, yet this was not enough to do interviews in Arabic on my own. I did most of my interviewees in English, and a few in Arabic with the help of a translator. The interviewees undertaken in English was the least problematic, but during some of the interviews, I and my interviewee had problems understanding each other completely, and this restricted the flow of the interview, and made a natural, conversation-like interview difficult. These interviewees were more like structured question and

answer sessions, yet I gained lots of useful information from all the interviews, even though I could have learned even more if it were not for the language problems.

The interviews in Arabic were more challenging. It turned out to be difficult to find a translator that could be with me during all of the interviews, so I used a few different translators on different occasions. During two interviews a representative from the GUPWom had found a translator, during one interview I used my own translator, and during one interview I asked another interviewee to translate, because my translator cancelled in the last minute.

Several issues always arise when using a translator. One of them is that stopping to translate makes the interview slower, and makes it difficult to retain a natural flow in the interview. During the first two interviews, I made the interviews more structured. In this way I downplayed the importance of the flow. In these interviews I got an almost full and very accurate translation of everything during the interview. This made it easy for me to follow the interview, but it also made the interview very formal. In the two other interviews I relied more on my own ability to speak directly to the interviewee in Arabic and pick up some phrases from the answers. These interviews were much less structured, and more conversation-like, and I used the translator to help whenever I lost track of the conversation. This made it a bit more difficult to ask follow-up questions that were directly related to the interviewee's stories, but it made the interviewees speak much more freely. Also the translators knew my studies quite well, and helped me asking relevant follow-up questions to keep the conversation going. In these interviews, the translator was taking a very active role in bringing the interview forward, and in one case the translator knew the interviewee well and added a little to the information he gave. This was affecting the information I got through the interview a lot, and must be taken into consideration during the analysis. However I believe this helped me gain more information, both by keeping the conversation going during the interview, and by making the cultural differences between me and my interviewees less apparent.

In all the four interviews in Arabic I used a recorder during the whole of the interviews. This made me able to listen to everything the interviewees was saying again, and to get an accurate translation of what was said, both by the interviewee and the translator. This proved very important to me during the analysis, because it made it possible for me to take into account the effect the translator is likely to have had on the interview.

Observation and presence in the community:

I was present on an event in the GUPWom, on practices in Choral Abbed ElShams and AlFalluja, and at another event together with many of the interviewees. In addition I spent some time with several of my interviewees outside of the interview-situation, and one of them invited me home to her family. This presence in the community is not a direct part of my analysis, but it did affect both

my relations to my interviewees and my understanding of the case, by giving me an insight into their situation which I could never have gained through the interviews alone. For example I was sitting in a street-cafe after an interview together with the interviewee and a few other people. When we sat there some people started to move the tables and chairs inside, and we had to move to another cafe. My interviewee told me that this happened because the police were there to strike down on street-cafes. Such cafes are very common in Cairo, and usually not perceived as illegal, but the police are regularly raiding them in order to confiscate the chair and tables. Those are later sold to give the police some extra income. This is just one example of the arbitrary law enforcement in Cairo, where the only purpose of the law is to give some benefits in specific situations. In this situation it was the police that could make some money on selling the chairs, in the museum the guards put up barriers in order that they could get "tips" from the visitors for letting them pass. This kind of enforcement of laws and regulations is very common in Egypt, and in some instances it is used politically by the government to hinder criticism. When the laws are of such a character that they are very commonly broken, it becomes easier for the government to punish people they do not like without too much attention. For example, it is very much easier to imprison someone for breaking a law than for being politically active, even though the law is ignored in other situations.

Ethical considerations during fieldwork:

Regarding the ethical considerations I had to do during my fieldwork, there are two issues I want to highlight. The first issue is the one of free and informed consent. According to Thagaard (2009), informed consent means that the interviewees should be informed about what participation in the project involves, and that they should be free to decide for themselves, without any pressure, whether to participate or not. They should also be free to cancel their participation at any time. Practically this is not as easy as it sounds. In my project I do not know how the people in the community interacted with each other when I was not present, so there is a possibility that some people in the community might have pressured others to participate. However I never had any suspicion of that, and I never encourage anyone to use any pressure toward making other people participate, neither did I use any such pressure myself. Therefore I feel right to assume that all my interviewees decided themselves whether to participate or not. When it comes to information, this is a bigger dilemma. Some of my interviewees asked me questions before we started the interview, and in those cases I took care to answer those questions as carefully as possible. One of my interviewees told me after the interview that usually when he meets someone for a project like mine, he would try to ask them some questions about the project, but this time he did not want to ask so many questions, because he wanted to speak freely and in his own language, not saying only what I wanted to hear. He captured an important point in this statement, and in this case I tried

telling him more about the project afterward. Regarding the rest of the interviewees, I explained who I was, and the basics of what I was doing before the interview. But I did not want to tell them too much about my projects, because that might have made them alter their contributions.

The second issue is the issue of confidentiality. When participating in interviews, the interviewees give you a lot of information that they are able to share with the researcher as an outsider, and the information they give will not have any consequences for them in their personal life later. Because of this, it is very important to make sure that the information gained from the interviews will remain between the interviewee and the researcher, and not get known by anyone else. This gives rise to some challenges in the presentation of the research that I will come back to, but it is also important how the researcher preserve the interview material to make sure it does not fall into the wrong hands. In the case of Egypt it is especially important that the information does not get into the wrong hands, because of the risk that the interviewees could face prosecution from the government. My interviewees were very aware of this, and most of them were careful not to voice any dangerous opinions, and I did not encourage them to do so either. Yet I was careful to keep the interview material safe. Another issue was being careful whenever I talked to someone in the community, not to talk about the interviews I had done with other people.

Analysis:

When I started working on the analysis I worked with each interview separately. In this way I obtained an understanding of which persons made which statements, and how the different statements were related to each other. But I soon turned my focus to a theme centred analysis, and this is also how the material is presented. Through theme centred analysis the information from all the interviewees can be gathered and compared within each theme. Through decontextualization, the information from the interviewees are taken out of its original context, and then recontextualized together with the theory (Thagaard 2009). This contributes to a deeper understanding of the issues in question, because comparing the views of the different interviewees brings out any present disagreement. It is also possible to explore if the interviewees are disagreeing according to specific lines. In my case, it was especially interesting to see the differences between the interviewees that were representing different organizations, and the interviewees that are only representing themselves, and there were also some differences in opinions that followed class lines. Those who come from families with a low income tend to emphasize certain problems, while those who have a higher income, and do not experience the problems themselves, tend to downplay their importance.

The biggest challenge when using theme centred analysis is the risk of alienating the interviewees. When using theme centred analysis, the information from the interviews is taken out

of its original context and put into the categories designed by the researcher. This might make the information come out different from how the interviewee intended it to be (Thagaard 2009). In my analysis, I have done my best to give a true representation of the opinions of the interviewees by my own comments on and analysis of the information. I have always tried to represent the interviewees in a way I believe they will find agreeable, but it is important to remember that even though the analysis is depending on the interview material, the arguments that are presented in the analysis are my own. The researcher is always writing her own story through the analysis, and in my case I have written the story so as to give as much as possible information about the issues I discuss, and to give as little as possible information about the separate interviewees. This is also done out of respect for the confidentiality of the interviewees. The interview situation should be such that the interviewee can trust the researcher, and be confident that what is said during the interview stays between the people present during the interview. When other people are present during the interview, this cannot always be guaranteed, but it is of vital importance that the information given during the interview is treated in such a way that it cannot be traced back to the interviewee from the presentation of the finished analysis. This is much easier to achieve through theme centred analysis, because the information is not gathered according to the interviewees (Thagaard 2009). Throughout the work with my thesis I have given the confidentiality of my interviewees very high priority. Because my research is partially critical of the Egyptian government, it is very important that no critical remarks can be traced back to the interviewees. Freedom of speech is not highly valued by the governing authorities in Egypt, and criticism of the government could in the worst case be punished with imprisonment. This is highly unlikely in my case, because it is a small project done in a country far away from Egypt, and because all of my interviewees were aware of the situation and careful with what they said, but the risk should be considered anyway. In addition, some of the information I obtained during the interviews was of such a character that it could be damaging for the interviewees if other people in the community found out about it. Therefore I have done my best to present the material in such a way that also people within the community shall not be able to know who said what.

For the same reasons that confidentiality is very important for my interviewees, many of them were very careful about giving their own opinions. However they often told me stories that said much more than their opinions could. For example interviewees could tell me stories of how they had troubles because of government regulations, but later say that they did not have any opinions about the government. In most cases, therefore, the stories my interviewees told me have been more important for the analysis than their direct opinions, simply because they were not willing to share their opinions except through their stories.

Discursive analysis very often takes the form of analysis of text, and that have been a

challenge for me in my analysis. In written text we can usually assume that the language is carefully thought through, so that it becomes possible to analyse the use of different vocabulary or grammar. In a conversation these things are often more arbitrary, and therefore more difficult to analyse. In my case it made no sense to analyse the data-material as text because it had been translated. The discourses within my case were always constructed in Arabic and then translated, either by the interviewees during the interview, or by myself and my translator when transcribing the interview. During the translation I must assume that many of the finer details of the discourse have been changed, thus I would gain very little by studying the details of the translations. For example all my interviewees used the word nationality to describe both nationality and citizenship, but because I do not know how these terms relate to each other in Arabic, their use of the word cannot tell me much. Instead I have analysed the meaning of the words, as the intentions were made clear from the stories my interviewees told me, and from that I could understand that they made a clear differentiation between the concepts of nationality and citizenship, even though they used the same word to describe both. The important thing in the analysis is thus not the use of the word nationality, but rather the meaning of the concepts of citizenship and nationality that were communicated through the stories.

Steps on the way to a complete analysis

The analysis consisted of many small steps on the way to the whole. While conducting and transcribing the interviews, I gained knowledge of the information and its original context within the interviews. I also started to make my opinions on the issues that were going to be important for my analysis, and when I finished transcribing the interviewees, I was ready to start screening them for the important parts and rearranging the information thematically.

To be able to categorize the data material I first had to work out a research question. According to Thagaard (2009), the research question should give the researcher a clear guidance in terms of what the research should focus on. It should be limited enough to be studied within the limits of the research project, at the same time as it should be open enough to allow for changes in the research as a result of new findings. At the same time she states that the research question should be shaped and reshaped continuously throughout the research. The research question I worked out at this stage of the thesis has changed several times since, but it was still important in guiding my work in the right directions and leading the way to the final research question.

After I finished the first categorization, I started writing out some text. First the text was almost only consisting of data from my interviews, and only a few analytical notes. As I wrote the main job was to recontextualize the data, first only by categorizing the data from the interviews, and then by adding my own viewpoints. During this process the categories were changed several times,

on order to best allow for a good presentation of the findings.

As I worked with these preliminary texts it proved it difficult to give them a clear direction. To answer my research question, there were several issues that should be analysed separately. Therefore I made several sub-questions to guide the work with the separate parts of the analysis. These sub-questions were also refined through the work with my analysis, until I was left with the two sub-questions that I presented in my introduction. In my analysis, I answer each of these questions in a separate chapter, thus having a clear direction for both of the chapters. The first of my analysis chapters is not guided by a question, but rather functioning as an introduction to the two following chapters.

The theory presented in the theory chapter was always there supporting my analysis. Together with the data material, the theory was shaping the analytical categories, and it was always in the back of my mind when working with the preliminary analysis. But it was first at the very end of my work with the analysis that I started using theory actively in the text.

The researcher's interpretation of the data material will always be different from the interpretation of the interviewee. One important source of these differences is that the researcher's interpretation is building on theory, while the interviewees' interpretation is building only on their own experiences (Thagaard 2009). My own interpretation of the data has also been based on theory right from the start, but by keeping the theory in the background for a limited period when working on the analysis I was able to go deeper into the material. If the theory gets too much space, the data material can easily be adjusted to fit the theory, but this leaves the risk of losing a lot of data on the way. During analysis, data will always be lost, but by keeping the theory in the background for a while, I was able to focus more on what the interviewees was emphasizing.

Presenting the findings

For me, a good presentation of the findings is a presentation where the interviewees can feel that they have contributed to the analysis in a positive way, yet the findings belongs to the researcher and the findings should not be altered in the presentation on behalf of the interviewees.

The interviewees have been very important for my thesis, and have provided me with an enormous help. Not only have they given me of their time, but they have been sharing their personal experiences, and the interviews sometimes brought up issues that they found it difficult to speak about. Still the interviewees went on with the interviews, because they wanted me to hear their stories, and use them in my research. Because of this, it is important to me to give them something back through the presentation of my research. A young man I interviewed told me that he hoped my project will give justice to the Palestinian people and help them to be more effective in their fight.

He wanted me to always keep that in mind when working on the project. Throughout the work with my thesis, this has been important to me.

Some people might see such an obligation toward the interviewees as problematic. The researcher should be clear about her role, and not take on the role of an activist during the research. She should not uncritically propagate the viewpoint of the interviewees or be reduced to a spokesperson for the cause. But this is not what I feel obligated to do either. For me, giving justice to the Palestinian people and helping them to be more effective in their fight is better done by conducting an academically sound research, that is critical of the interviewees and their opinions whenever that is necessary. In that way the world and the Palestinian community can learn as much as possible from the study.

Even though it is important to give the interviewees sufficient space in the thesis, in the end the thesis is, and will always be, the work of the researcher. In my text, I refer to the interviewees often, and I use a lot of quotations to illustrate my points, but the opinions presented in the text are only my own. When my work is depending directly on one or more interviews, I refer to them simply as interviews, or otherwise make it clear through the text, and when nothing else is stated the text is based on my own observations from my fieldwork and the work with my analysis. The researcher's opinions, as stated in the final presentation, might sometimes be in conflict with the opinions of the interviewees, but it is very important that the interviewees do not feel that their information has been misused. In my own thesis, I do not believe there are any big conflicts between my own opinions and the opinions of a majority of the interviewees, but I have been very careful to make the statements from my interviewees as anonymous as possible. According to Thagaard (2009), the ideal for this process is that the interviewees should not even be able to recognize their own statements, in this way no interviewees can point to a statement they made or a story they told and say that it has been misused.

In my presentation I have made one exception to the rule of anonymity. As already mentioned, some of my interviewees were representing PLO-institutions, and the view of those interviewees must be considered as the general view of the institutions they are representing. In these cases, the interviewees' full names and the organizations they are representing are clearly stated in the text.

Transferability and credibility

Traditionally, three terms should always be mentioned in the methods chapter, validity, reliability and generalization. These three terms refer to the ability of the methods to produce "correct", or scientifically objective answers to the research question, and the importance of the research outside of the case. Within social constructivism however, there are no such thing as an objective truth, and

moreover these three terms were made for, and are best used within quantitative research. The control mechanisms that can be used within quantitative methods are not always successful within qualitative methods. Thagaard (2009) argues that we should prefer the terms credibility and transferability. Credibility refers to whether the researcher has made the research as transparent as possible, so that it can be interpreted on the right basis. This is about describing the methods used, revealing the position of the researcher, and in other ways making the reader able to consider the role of the researcher in constructing the research results. In other words it is about presenting the methods in a clear and truthful way in the methods chapter. Transferability refers to whether the research findings can be used to gain new understanding of a broader phenomena, or in other ways be transferred to settings other than the original case.

The interpretation is the basis for transferability, and the researcher should make it clear how the research she has done can be relevant in a bigger setting. The transferability of the case can be depending on a lot of factors, but in my thesis I want to focus especially on the ability of other people to recognize the interpretation presented in the text. Not all the readers have to agree with the way the researcher has interpreted the data, but it is strengthening for the research if other people with experience of the phenomena studied find the interpretation agreeable. In this way the findings of a research project can give the readers a deeper understanding of phenomena they already know (Thagaard 2009). It is my aim to present my findings from this thesis in a clear and consistent way, and to identify some key mechanisms of importance to the case, so as to make it easier for the readers to use the text to gain a deeper understanding of their own experiences.

Chapter 4:

A background on Palestinians in Egypt:

Historically, Egypt and Palestine have been very close to each other, not just geographically, but economically and politically. Since the rise of Islam, they have been ruled by the same administration for long periods, and up until the Ottoman era, trade and migration between the two countries were thriving (Hourani 1991). Since the 20th century the relations between the two countries have been significantly affected by the foundation of the Israeli state and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (ElAbed 2009, interviews).

The role of nationalism in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the refugee-movements from historical Palestine to Egypt and the relations between Egyptian and Israeli governments are all important issues that have had great impact on the relations between Egypt, the Palestinian people and the Palestinian institutions. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is very simplified a conflict over land and the right to live on it, and nationality has been used by both sides to argue why they belong to the land and the land belongs to them. The influx of refugees to Egypt has been minimal, compared to Egypt's large population, but the refugees make up a very important group politically. This has to do with the relations between Israeli and Egyptian authorities. From the first establishment of Israel, Egypt was one of its key enemies militarily and ideologically. With the signing of the Camp David agreements Egypt gave up fighting Israel by military means, but their policies towards the Palestinians in Egypt are still emphasizing that they belong in Palestine as a result of their nationality, and that they should ultimately return to Palestine.

The Palestinian community in Egypt is not a homogeneous community, but rather a diverse group of people. The only thing all the members have in common is that they have some connection to Palestine that makes them think of themselves as Palestinian. The Palestinian institutions in Egypt are very important because of their role in shaping the Palestinian identity and relations between the Palestinians in Egypt and the Egyptian authorities. For many they represent the only opportunity to meet other Palestinians outside of their own small circles of families and friends.

Even though the Palestinian institutions have a relatively small direct impact on the Palestinians in Egypt, they are still very important. Because they are the main representatives of the community and their main contact with the Egyptian authorities, the relationship between the institutions and the authorities have a direct impact on people's lives, through the laws they are confronted with every day.

The chapter starts with an outline of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, with an emphasis on

issues such as the relations between Israeli and Egyptian government and Palestinian migration to Egypt. The second part of the chapter consists of an introduction on the present Palestinian population in Egypt and the main Palestinian institutions. I will discuss the changing relations between the PLO-institutions and the Egyptian authorities as well as their significance to Palestinians in Egypt.

The Palestinian – Israeli conflict

Palestine – From Ottoman to British Colony:

From the 16th to the 18th century, Palestine was an Ottoman colony. It was important for the Ottoman Empire to retain direct control over the colony, because of the importance of the holy cities of Jerusalem and Hebron. With the fall of the Ottoman Empire after World War 1, the former Ottoman Colonies were transferred to the British and French Empires, and Palestine came under British rule from 1916 (Hourani 1991). During this period relations with Egypt was good, and trade and migrants moved freely across the borders. Many Palestinians went to Egypt seeking business opportunities following the Egyptian economic boom at the end of the 19th century (ElAbed 2009).

At this time, the nationalist discourse had risen to a hegemonic status in Europe. The idea that every nation should rule its own sovereign territory had a lot of support, and it had become difficult to imagine another way of organizing states. Together with the increasing discrimination of Jews, this made the way for the rise of Zionism, the dream of a sovereign Jewish state in the Promised Land of Zion. From the 1880s a new Jewish community was growing in Palestine, dreaming of a Jewish nation rooted in the land. In 1897 the first Zionist congress gathered, and called for the creation of a home-land for the Jewish people in Palestine. Zionist organizations started colonizing the land and buying property through the Jewish National Fund (JNF). This land was declared to be the inalienable property of the Jewish people. It could not be sold or rented to non-Jews, and no non-Jews could work on it (Hourani 1991).

According to Swedenburg (1991, 1990), the Zionist project was seen as a project of taking back an empty land for the Jews. The Arab inhabitants were at first seen merely as a part of the landscape that needed little attention, but as a result of the Arab resistance to the Zionist projects the Zionists launched a massive project aimed at confirming Israeli history of the land and concealing Arab history. They were transforming the land through renaming places and through excavations of places of significance to the Jewish history.

This interpretation draws on the discourse of "belonging as nationality". Because the Jews saw themselves as a separate nation, they also needed a separate state. And because historical Palestine constituted the promised land of Zion, historical Palestine is where the new state should be built. Because the state was a Jewish national-state, every Jew belonged in that state through

Map of Palestine



Source: <http://www.countryseek.com/geos/palestine.html>

Downloaded 29th of August 2010

Historical Palestine constitutes of all the highlighted areas.

Today most of these areas are the territory of the Israeli state, while the two separate areas inside the stippled lines are Palestinian areas.

The Gaza strip is controlled by Hamas, and has been under Israeli blockade since the winter of 2008-09.

The West Bank is controlled by the PA, but Israeli settlements are common throughout the area.

their membership of the Jewish nation. The Arabs however did not belong to Palestine in specific, because within the discourse of "belonging as nationality", their nationality was seen as Arab, and so they belonged in the Arab countries, and not in the Promised Land of Zion.

By the year 1917 the idea of establishing Jewish national-home in Palestine had got a lot of support in Britain, and the Balfour declaration was written. According to Hourani (1991, p.318), this declaration "*stated that the government viewed with favour the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine, provided this did not prejudice the religious and civil rights of other inhabitants of the country*". This declaration provided for Jewish immigration to Palestine and land transfers to Jews on a much bigger scale, and tensions soon became inevitable (ElAbed 2009).

13 years later, with the Buraq Rebellion in 1929, came the first serious clashes between the Jewish immigrants and the original Palestinian population. Zionist demonstrations near the al-Aqsar mosque triggered widespread Arab rioting targeting Jewish communities. Few years later followed the 1936-39 rebellion protesting British rule and its pro-Zionist policies (ElAbed 2009). These rebellions can be seen as mainly anti-colonial rebellions, and they were very important in constructing the Palestinian nation (Swedenburg 2003). From this point in time, nationality has also played a vitally important role on the Palestinian side of the conflict. Because the Zionist constructed Palestine as an empty land, by referring to the lack of a Palestinian nation, it became very important for the Palestinians to construct and confirm their own nation and, following from that, their own claims to the land. In this way they could answer the Zionist within the same discourse as the Zionists used, and considering the hegemonic status of that discourse, anything else might soon have proved useless. Swedenburg (1990, 1991) is describing how memories of the Buraq Rebellion are used to construct the history of a national movement, and how nationalist signifiers were heavily used for the first time during this rebellion. The Palestinian peasants (Fellahin) were made into signifiers of the Palestinian nation, because of their intimate connection to the land.

The British government made two attempts at resolving the growing tensions. In 1937 it put forward a plan to divide historical Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state. This was acceptable to the Zionists, as it gave them the opportunity to continue to build their nation within their own state, but it was unacceptable to the Arabs. In 1939 a new proposal was made, this time to establish a government with an Arab majority and limitations to Jewish immigration, but this plan was not accepted by the Jews (Hourani 1991).

With the end of World War Two, and the massive condemnation of the Holocaust that followed it, the Zionist project gained massive support throughout Europe. At the same time Zionist groups launched a massive campaign of violence against the British, aiming to force them to

lift restriction on Jewish immigration to Palestine. According to ElAbed (2009), the British was unable to handle the conflicts between the Zionist demands, and its obligation to the Arab majority, and in February 1947 the British administration decided to hand the problem over to the UN. Following this, the UN general assembly passed a resolution recommending the partition of Palestine into two states. Again the nationalist discourse played an important part, and the idea of one nation - one state was seen as the only viable idea.

Almost immediately after the resolution was passed, skirmishes broke out between the Israeli Haganah forces and Arab irregular forces, and many Palestinians felt compelled to leave their homes and seek refuge in nearby Arab countries even before the official foundation of Israel (ElAbed 2009). When I spoke with the interviewees about this, they always stressed that they were forced to leave. They told me that many Egyptians believe that they left the land out of their own free will, and sold their land to the Israelis. A young man told me that he had read a lot about this issue, and found out that only about 1,5% of the Palestinians had actually sold their land, and even for them, they had been threatened that if they refused to sell, the Jews would take it from them later anyway (Interview Cairo 2009). This was a very important point for many, because it demonstrates that they did not leave the land out of their own free will. This is something I will come back to several times later in my analysis, both in regards to their "belonging" in the land, and in regards to the "guest-metaphor" that I argue is used about them in Egypt.

The foundation of Israel:

On the 14th of May 1948 the state of Israel was founded. According to Kook (2000, p. 265), Israel was "*consciously and by design established as a state for a specific nation, the Jewish nation.*" In this context Jewishness is no longer seen as a question of religion, but rather as one of nation. The Jewish nation developed from the Jewish religion, and has its own culture, tradition and language. As Israel is a state for the Jewish nation, the Israeli constitutional arrangements strongly encourages the Jewishness of the state, and one of the areas in which this is happening is that of citizenship.

The law of return and the nationality law state that every Jew in the world is a member of the Jewish nation, and on that basis has the right to live in Israel. The basis for this law is the concept of homeland, and the thought that Israel is the homeland of the Jews. According to this discourse, all the Jews living outside of Israel are living in a diaspora, and have the right to return to their historical homeland. If they choose to do so, they will automatically have the right to acquire Israeli citizenship (Kook 2000).

Although these laws were only put into existence in the early 50's, the nationalist discourse behind the laws got big consequences for the Arab inhabitants already from the foundation of Israel in 1948. From 1925 every inhabitant of Palestine acquired citizenship to the British mandate of

Palestine. However with the foundation of the Israeli state, all non-Jewish inhabitants of the new territories automatically lost their citizenship, as the new Israeli citizenship was only granted to Jews. Until the coming into force of the Israeli nationality law in 1952 all non-Jewish inhabitants of Israel remained stateless. From then on the nationality law required non-Jewish inhabitants of the new state to go through a process of naturalization in order to acquire citizenship. This was a very difficult process, and many Palestinians remained stateless for many years, and even inherited the statelessness to their children and grand-children. In 1968 the requirement where slightly relaxed, but it was not until 1980 that another law was passed that made it possible for most of the Palestinian inhabitants of Israel to obtain citizenship (Kassim 2000). In this way the Israeli representation of them as people that did not belong to the land, was made true through Israeli policies, and that is the reason why it has become so important for the Palestinians, and for the Arab countries, to construct a strong Palestinian nationality. And through their insistence that the Palestinians belonged in what had become Israel, they gained recognition for this, at least for the those that remained on Israel until the time when they obtained citizenship. But those who were forced to leave as a result of the 1948-events have never been able to return, and Israel has never recognized their claims to the land.

On the 15th of May 1948, the day after the declaration of the establishment of Israel, Arab armies from Transjordan, Syria, Iraq and Egypt entered Palestine in an attempt to save what was left of the areas allotted to the Arabs under the UN partition plan (ElAbed 2009). Haganah had launched attacks on several Arab cities, both within and outside of the territory allocated for the Israeli state by the UN, and the fighting that followed created the first big wave of refugees into the neighbouring countries. A woman whose parents experiences this period described the situation like this: *"The news kept informing us that we just have to be absent for two or three months, and the Arab army will enter and kick out the Jews, then they can come back"* (Interview Cairo 2009). They saw their absence as short term measure to keep them safe during the conflicts, and never dreamed that they would not be able to return. And they certainly did not intend to give up their rights to the land. Indeed it was common to keep the key to the house, because they thought that they would be able to return to the same house, within a limited amount of time. Some of the refugees were able to enter Egypt through relatives living in the country, or because they had the necessary financial resources, but not many had these options (ElAbed 2009, Interviews Cairo 2009).

By the time the armistice agreement between Israel and the Arab states was signed in the beginning of 1949, Israel had seized 78 % of the territories of historical Palestine, as opposed to the 55 % that were allotted to them in the UN partition plan. The remaining territories were the West Bank and the Gaza strip, of which the West Bank became incorporated into Jordan, and the Gaza strip were placed under Egyptian authority. Just like the surrounding Arab countries, these areas

took in many refugees from the war and the events before the war, and the refugees thus vastly outnumbered the indigenous population, making the areas very crowded (ElAbed 2009). As a result of the war about two-thirds of the Arab population were forced to leave their homes as refugees. After the war, Israel was unwilling to let them come back, and the British, American and Israeli government expected them to be absorbed into the populations of the countries where they settled (Hourani 1991). The Arab states however have resisted this, by actively hindering the Palestinians from integrating into their countries, by such means as denying them citizenship and emphasising their eventual return to Palestine.

As a result of the waves of Palestinian refugees out of Palestine, and the influx of Jewish migrants to the new Israeli state, the demographic balance after the war was very much in favour of the Jews. At this time they started a massive campaign of eradicating any signs of Palestinian history in the land, by eradicating Palestinian villages and memorial sites. In this way they were denying the Palestinians a national history (Swedenburg 1990, 1991). Within the discourse of “belonging as nationality”, this can be seen as a way of denying the Palestinians any rights to the land. Any nation needs a national history, and by eradicating the proofs of a national history, Israel was seeking to eradicate the Palestinian nation, and thus the claims of the Palestinians that they belong to the land.

Egyptian administration of the Gaza strip:

The vast influx of refugees into the Gaza strip in 1948-49 created serious economic problems and unemployment in the area. The area was administrated as a separate country from Egypt, but in the era of Gamal Abd ElNasser’s presidency, starting in 1954, the regulations on migration between Egypt and the Gaza strip were relaxed. Starting from the late 1950s, the Egyptian administration began encouraging Palestinians to come to Egypt in order to work or continue their education. This created a vast influx of Palestinian migrants to Egypt, but this was seen as a short term measure, and most of the migrants were never intending to stay in Egypt permanently (ElAbed 2009).

In this period tensions between Egypt and Israel were high, and an important source of the tension was the influx of Palestinians from the Gaza-strip to Israel consisting of refugees that began sneaking across the borders in order to reclaim their possessions. Later events increased the tension, and when Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal in July 1956, this was soon followed by Israeli occupation of the Gaza strip, and a joint attack by Israel, France and the UK on the Canal. This war ended when Israel withdrew from the Gaza-strip in 1957 after heavy pressure from the USA (ElAbed 2009).

When nationalism first got a hold in the Arab countries, it was seen as a way towards national independence for the Arab countries, through the focus on the right of each nation to

govern its own sovereign territory. But in the 1950s and 60s, the focus on each country was attempted changed into a focus on Pan-Arabism. This has also been termed Nasserism, as the Egyptian president Gamal Abd ElNasser was the front spokesman of the new way (Hourani 1991). As the only country that did not yet gain independence from colonial powers, Palestine was a cornerstone for Pan-Arabism. The idea was that the Arab nations had to stand together in their efforts to liberate historical Palestine from Zionist colonization (ElAbed 2009).

The 6 day war of 1967:

In 1967 Israel launched a surprise attack on Egypt, Syria and Jordan, and within 6 days they had captured the Gaza strip and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, the Golan Heights from Syria and the West Bank from Jordan. This war created a big wave of refugees from the Gaza strip to Egypt. Many people followed the retreat of the Egyptian army, and members of the Gaza administration, army and police force were allowed to settle in Egypt. Many were displaced for the second time, being refugees from the 1948-events, and again from the war of 1967. But the most significant influx of refugees from the Gaza strip to Egypt came from an Israeli initiative which swept the Gaza strip for any men with possible connection to Palestinian resistance groups, and left them on the Egyptian border. The Egyptian government had no choice but to accept the refugees and many were recruited to the armed forces (ElAbed 2009). A young woman described the process like this:

"My father came to Egypt in 67. He was a young man. He was deported together with other young men. It was a lot of controversy around this group, as they were deported without any reason. That is, to the degree that they went in the same clothes they were wearing. My father used to tell me that they were in the camp and they called for them in microphones, youth from that age to that age, to be collected in one place. They took them. They were evacuated to more than one Arabic country, and Abd El Nasser agreed that they could come to Egypt. They first got to a place called Muddirayat El Tahrir, close to Kafr El Sheikh in the north of Egypt. After that the PLO began to see what their specializations were, and after that my father started working with the PLO. He worked as a representative for the PLO in the Palestinian Women's Union." (Interview Cairo 2009)

These deportations were experienced as completely arbitrary, and the story also shows how little warning the young men were given before they had to leave. The official Israeli story is that supporters of the PLO were deported, but in reality they deported all the young men in their way. For those who came to Egypt, the Egyptian government took care of them by placing them in the army, or employing them within the PLO (ElAbed 2009, interviews Cairo 2009).

In addition to all the refugees that came into Egypt as a result of the war, the economic migrants that were encouraged to come during the previous years were now unable to return to Gaza. It is estimated that about 30 000 Palestinians were living in Egypt in 1969, as opposed to about 15 000 in 1960. (ElAbed 2009).

The Camp David Agreements and changing relations between the Egyptian government and the PLO/Palestine:

The 6 day war ended in a cease fire agreed upon in the United Nations, but the relations between the two countries were far from peaceful. In the following years there was a series of military incidents along the Suez Canal, and on the 6th of October 1973, Egypt and Syria launched a joint surprise attack on Israel. They soon captured the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights. However Israel, with American aid, regained the dominance, and by the ceasefire at the 25th of October, Israel had gained control of big Syrian and Egyptian territories. The war ended with the intervention of the UN, partly caused by a blockage on oil-supply from the OPEC-countries, which forced Israel to withdraw from Egyptian and Syrian territories (Hourani 1991).

The October war became a turning point in the relations between Egypt and Israel. As a result, the first serious negotiations between Egypt and Israel were set out, and these ended in the Camp David agreements that were signed in September the following year. The terms of the agreements secured Egyptian control of the Sinai Peninsula, and the first steps towards a establishing a Palestinian state in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza strip (Hourani 1991, ElAbed 2009).

The Camp David Agreement made an important turning point for the relations between the Palestinian organisations, most notable the PLO, and the Egyptian government. Until this time they had been cooperating closely, and shared the hope to defeat Israel by military means. By signing the Camp David Agreement the Egyptian government alienated themselves from the Palestinians, and from most of the Arab world. According to an interviewee this was followed by a change of the official representations of Egyptians in matters such as football and promotion for tourists. From representing themselves mainly as Arabs, the attention were turned more and more towards their older history, and they started representing themselves as descendants of the Pharaohs.

In the economic sphere, the takeover of Abd ElNasser, had lead Egypt to rely on a socialist economic model, but the war in 1967 for the first time revealed severe problems with the Egyptian economy. This was the start of a more Western orientation of the economy, and after the Camp David Agreements, this development gained speed, when Sadat started a new Open Door policy in the hopes of attracting foreign investment (Utvik 1990, ElAbed 2009, interviews Cairo 2009).

The Palestinian Community in Egypt:

The estimates of how many Palestinians are living in Egypt today are highly inaccurate, and ranges between 50000 to 70000. According to ElAbed (2009, p6) *"no reliable statistics can be found for the Palestinians. The Egyptian government either does not have records on Palestinians, as some officials have claimed, or (what is more likely) it considers the disclosure of such data to impinge*

on state security." She further states that the Palestinians in Egypt are scattered across most of the Northern governorates of the country, and that there are few largely Palestinian villages or neighbourhoods. Indeed the scattered nature of the Palestinian population in Egypt seems to be one of its main characteristics. Not only are they dispersed around the country, but those living in Cairo are also spread across big parts of the city, with few gathering points. There are some areas with more Palestinians in them, but even in these areas the Palestinian population is a small minority. The geographical scatteredness also reflects the economic reality of the Palestinians, as they live where they can afford to live. Indeed an interviewee told me that most of the Palestinians in Cairo lives in the upper class areas of Heliopolis and Nasr City, but then another interviewee present at the time immediately corrected him and told me that not many Palestinians can afford living in these areas, so that even though these may be preferred areas among the Palestinian population, this is not reflected in the actual settlement patterns.

This reflects the big economic differences within the Palestinian population in Egypt. A few of them, notably those with high positions within the PLO or the PLO-connected institutions, are very rich. These people are also very visible, as the formal representation of the Palestinian people in Egypt. However the big majority of Palestinians in Egypt are either middle class or poor, but these are not as visible because they are often confused with Egyptians (ElAbed 2009).

The diversity of the Palestinian population in Egypt, both geographically and economically makes the Egyptian case significantly different from the cases of for example Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, where the Palestinians live clustered together in refugee camps. But the absence of camps affects more than just settlement patterns. For Palestinians in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, the camps represents Palestinian places, where the Palestinian community is gathered, and a focus for their Palestinian identity, while in Egypt most Palestinians have little knowledge of other Palestinians outside of their personal circles of families and friends. Many Palestinians living outside of Cairo are not even aware of the PLO-institutions and the services they offer, so they completely lack a gathering place where they can meet other Palestinians (ElAbed 2009). But for the Palestinians that do use the PLO-institutions, they are very important. For these people the PLO-institutions are places where they can meet other Palestinians, learn about Palestine and even about the Palestinian community in Egypt. For this reasons, the PLO-institutions represents the only gathering points where the Palestinians can come together as a community. In addition the PLO-institutions are vitally important, in that they are the only kind of formal representation of the Palestinians in Egypt.

PLO-institutions and the Palestinian Embassy in Egypt

The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) has maintained a presence in Egypt from its start in 1964 until today, however the scope and nature of the presence have varied with time. The PLO-

head offices were established in Cairo in 1965. They were running welfare programs, and helped local Palestinians solve bureaucratic problems, in addition to fulfilling many of the functions of an embassy. Before the move to Gaza in 1993, they were the largest employer of Palestinians in Egypt. The PLO also offered its employees regular incomes, pensions, free education up to the university level and reduced university fees for their children, and subsidized or free health care at the Palestinian Hospital. When PLO moved most of its activities to Gaza in 1993, the offices were transformed into the Palestinian Embassy in Cairo. The embassy's main tasks include issuing Palestinian passports, facilitating the transfer of wounded from Gaza to Egypt for medical treatment, securing entry permits from Israel for travellers to Gaza and helping Palestinians get the necessary permits for entering Egypt. Two of the employees of the embassy highlighted the help the embassy is providing to the Palestinian people in Egypt, such as helping students applying for university, and helping Palestinian families to pay the school fees for their children. The embassy is the official representative of Palestinians in Egypt, and the main channel for solving Palestinian problems, as well as promoting the view of the Palestinians regarding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and other matters of importance to the Palestinian government (ElAbed 2009, interviews Cairo 2009).

Apart from the head offices, and later the Embassy, PLO are running several institution of vital important for the Palestinian community in Cairo. These institutions have two main causes, to mobilize people for the Palestinian cause, and to serve the local communities. They have included the General Union for Palestinian Students (GUPS), The General Union for Palestinian Workers (GUPW), the General Union for Palestinian Women (GUPWom), the Palestinian Red Crescent Society and several smaller institutions. They all have their head offices in Cairo, and their reach out of the city is very limited (ElAbed 2009, interviews Cairo 2009).

The General Union for Palestinian Students (GUPS) was formed in 1959, when the Palestinian Student Union in Egypt, which was founded in 1952 by Yasser Arafat and his comrades, joined with other Palestinian student unions throughout the Arab world. It did not become a part of the PLO until Fatah's take over in 1969. It used to be the most important PLO-unit in Egypt, and its activities went far beyond ordinary student politics. They met with state-leaders, and in 1965 they organized an international symposium on Palestine attended by political leaders and intellectuals from 58 countries. In addition it had a strong focus on mass-mobilizations and activism, but it was this mobilization and activism that ultimately got it into trouble. In 1972 Egypt experienced massive riots protesting Sadat's policies, and especially the ambiguous relations with Israel at the time. The government saw the Palestinians as being in the forefront of the demonstrations, and that resulted in mass-detentions of Palestinians. In 1975 the GUPS arranged demonstrations against the Sinai II

agreements, and this led to deportations of many Palestinian students and sharp limitations on GUPS activities. The union was closed by the government in 1977, at the same time as Sadat visited Jerusalem, an event that is widely seen as a turning point in the government relations to Israel and Palestine (ElAbed 2009).

The General Union for Palestinian Workers (GUPW) has been in existence since 1963, and its mandate is *“To defend the rights of Palestinian workers in Cairo”* (Interview with Yussuf ElNemnem, head of the GUPW, Cairo 2009). They have 11000 members, representing 40 different occupations, and help their members in all kinds of issues regarding their work. When I visited they had little activities, but rather waited for members to come to them in seek of assistance.

The General Union for Palestinian Women (GUPWom) was established in 1963 by Samira Abu Ghazalah, who was a Palestinian studying in Egypt. She established the union as a gathering place for Palestinians. The members are Palestinian women over 18 years of age, and Egyptian women married to Palestinian men. Their aim is to help Palestinian Women living in Egypt, and to keep the Palestinian culture alive in Egypt. They are running the Choral Abbed El Shams choir, they engage young women in production of Palestinian embroidery, and they are hosting events related to Palestine and Palestinians in Egypt. When I visited they had recently restarted a cultural committee, committed to promoting Palestinian culture and understanding of issues central to the Palestinian cause. The Union is strongly oriented towards providing services to the Palestinian community, and that is its main way of attracting members, but it also focuses a lot on conserving, and teaching about, Palestinian culture (ElAbed 2009, Observations and interviews Cairo 2009).

The Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) is a part of the international Red Cross/Red Crescent Society, and it also has ties to the PLO. The Egyptian branch is a part of the Egyptian Red Crescent society, and has its headquarters in Heliopolis in Cairo. They are running the Palestinian hospital in Cairo, which in addition to being a normal hospital open to all inhabitants of Egypt, is also serving Palestinians from Gaza and providing training for Palestinian doctors. They also run a Palestinian cultural centre, containing a heritage exhibition and a theatre, and they are running the Fallujah folkloric group, which consist of a choir and a dance team (Interview with Mai, head of the PRCS Cairo branch, Cairo 2009). In 1983 they opened the Fallujah Nursing Institute which is training nurses, technicians and paramedics, and the hospital includes a recruitment centre for qualified graduates. The hospital provides free care to a large section of Palestinians, and they are an important source of employment (ElAbed 2009).

The hospital is perhaps the single most important gathering place for Palestinians in Egypt,

but both the GUPWom and the PRCS play vitally important roles. The Embassy and the GUPW are less important. They are still places to seek help, and places where Palestinians are employed, but they are not as important as gathering places. Both the GUPWom and the PRCS are having regular arrangements that gather many Palestinians, and the Fallujah and Choral Abd ElShams is very important gathering places for the youths that constitutes them. The folkloric groups are places where the youths meet on a regular basis, usually ones a week, to practise together and meet other Palestinians. They are open for all Palestinian youth, and the threshold to getting in is relatively small. For many of my interviewees, these groups were important places to meet other Palestinians, and they the most important among the few meeting places for young Palestinians in Egypt. Other groups have also existed, but none of my interviewees could tell me about any other youth groups existing today.

Changing relationships between the Egyptian authorities and the PLO-institutions:

Egypt was central in the emergence of the first Palestinian institutions in the early 1960's. Nasser was a big supporter of the Palestinian case, and his efforts were crucial in establishing PLO as the main Palestinian organization. But Nasser's support of the Palestinian institutional development was always subordinated to larger political aims, both in strengthening his position in relation to the other Arab states and in co-opting Palestinian mobilization and bringing it under his control (ElAbed).

In 1970 PLO started criticizing Nasser for his handling of the conflict with Israel, and this led to the first serious fallouts between the PLO and the Egyptian government. Several smaller institution was closed down, but Nasser remains popular among the Palestinians. He is still remembered for favouring them in his politics, and treating the Palestinians in Egypt a pare with Egyptian nationals, and for his intervention in the conflicts between PLO and the Jordanian regime. His last act before his death was to broker a truce between King Hussein of Jordan and Yasser Arafat, thereby ending the most acute phase of the conflict (ElAbed 2009, interviews 2010).

The relations between the PLO and the Egyptian government continued to be good for a while after Nasser's death, but in 1975, with the Sinai II agreements and the protests of the GUPS, they started to deteriorate. The Sinai II agreements later led to the Camp David Agreements that declared peace between Egypt and Israel, and is seen as a major turning point in Egypt's relations to the Palestinians. Two years later Sadat made a visit to Jerusalem, acknowledging Israeli control of the city, thus signifying his final break with the Palestinian cause (ElAbed 2009).

In 1979, the signing of the Camp David Agreements caused the formal break between Egypt and the PLO. Later Egypt has endeavoured to play a more active role in the peace process and restoring their relations with the PLO, but this has made little impact on the status of the

Palestinians in Egypt. After the break with the authorities, the PLO-institutions' presence was greatly diminished, and they have never regained their previous importance. This was accentuated by the move of many PLO-activities to Palestine with the establishment of the Palestinian National Authorities (PNA/PA) in 1993. Since this the orientation of the remaining institution has been much more local and less political, as the only organizations that survived the break did so as a result of their careful avoidance of any political activities. Today the institutions function as gathering places in force of their history, and in lack of alternatives, but they have lost most of the political role they had in the start.

The changes in the relations between the government and the PLO-institutions have been followed by changes in the laws regarding Palestinians in Egypt, causing big changes in the lives of individual Palestinians. In the time of Abd El Nasser Palestinians were treated as Egyptian nationals, and many looks back at this time as a good time for the Palestinians in Egypt. But the times were changing, and after the signing of the Camp David Agreements and the following disagreements between the government and the PLO, the laws that treated Palestinians as Egyptian national were gradually changed. In 1979 the Egyptian cultural minister Abu ElSidal was killed by Palestinian extremists, and at the same time a massive media-campaign was initiated against the Palestinians. The campaign focused on the Palestinians as guests, and everything Egypt had done for them, both in terms of receiving them in their country, and in terms of the wars they had fought. They portrayed the Palestinians as ungrateful because of their protests against the peace agreements. These two events became turning points in the public relations to the Palestinians, and following this most of the regulations that treated Palestinians as equals with Egyptian nationals were nullified (ElAbed 2009, interviews Cairo 2009).

These changes demonstrates how the Palestinians are subject to events far out of their control. As belonging to the same nationality, they are seen as one group, and everybody is held responsible for the actions of everyone else in the group. As leaders and formal representatives of the group, the PLO is given immense power over the lives of all Palestinians, even though their policies is not necessarily wanted by a majority of the Palestinians.

"Belonging as nationality" has been important in the history of the Palestinian-Israeli, because it is to such a large degree a conflict about control over territory, and the claims of the Palestinian and Israeli nations to the land. In order to strengthen the Palestinian claims to the land, the building of a Palestinian nation with claims to the land has been in focus. The emergence of institutions that were claiming to represent the Palestinian nation was important in this context, and one of the main tasks of the PLO-institutions has been to uplift the Palestinian nation, both through nation building and through demanding a voice for the nation. Because of the role the PLO-institutions have had in

building and representing the Palestinian nation, and because of their changing relations with the Egyptian government, their impact on the lives of Palestinians in Egypt have been severe. For those who have embraced their Palestinian nationality, they remain a focus point among a diverse population. For all Palestinians they remain important because of the impact their relations with the government have had on the conditions for their stay in Egypt.

For the members of Choral Abd ElShams and AlFalluja the discourses on nationality that are prevalent within the PLO-institutions are important. They are people that are interested in learning about Palestine and emphasising their Palestinian identity, and what they learn in the PLO-affiliated groups are important for their conceptions of their national identity. Yet they also found their nationality problematic, especially when they were confronted with it in situations where they were treated as foreigners. In many cases they were pulled between the wish of being Palestinians and maintaining their national identity, and their wish for having an easier life with an Egyptian nationality. The next chapter is focusing on their experiences in Egypt, their encounters with the foreigner laws and their attempts, or lack of such, to return to Palestine.

Chapter 5:

The Political Construction of Host-country and Home-land; Experiences in exile

Home-land and host-country are important concepts in the "belonging as nationality" discourse. They are important for how we understand migration, and as such for how we construct the subject-position of migrants. The place the migrants are moving from is constructed as their home. This is a place where they belong, and where they make the rules. The place they are moving to is constructed as the host-country. In this place they are guests, and as guests they should accept the rules of the host or leave. By using these metaphors, belonging to a place is effectively reduced to be a question of nationality and nothing else. A migrant might live in the host-country as a refugee or a guest-worker, or because of connections to things, places or people in that country. But within the discourse of "belonging as nationality", this is irrelevant. The important thing is that the migrants are guests in their host-country and at home in another country, respective of their nationality.

In Egypt, the notion of being a host-country for "displaced" Palestinians have been, and continue to be, politically important. It is important for the Egyptian authorities, because it is a means to construct beneficial power-relations with the Palestinian community. And it is important for the Palestinian leadership because it presupposes Palestine as the place where the Palestinians belong and should return to. The Israeli authorities however, are arguing that Palestinians do not belong specifically in historical Palestine. They are also utilizing the discourse of "belonging as nationality", but they use this discourse to argue that Jews belong in Israel, as Israel is the Jewish nation, while Palestinians belong anywhere in the Arab world, because Palestine does not qualify as a separate nation.

Discourses are primarily used to describe and interpret phenomena, but the way we interpret different phenomena have vital importance for how we deal with them. When Palestinians are described as guests in Egypt, they are also treated as guests, and this has obvious impacts on their rights in the country. In the same way, when Israeli authorities claim that the Palestinians that have left historical Palestine do not belong there, that is also used as a basis for denying them entry to the country. On this background I ask the following question:

- How has the discourse of "belonging as nationality" been used to describe and determine the relations of Palestinians living in Egypt to Palestine and Egypt?

The chapter is starting by discussing the rights of Palestinians in four different areas: citizenship,

residence, work and education. Their rights within these areas are very important for their experience of belonging or being marginalized because the regulations of them have a serious impact on their lives. The second part of the chapter discuss their experiences of how Palestine has been constructed as their home-land by the Egyptian authorities and the PLO, at the same time as they are denied access to the country by Israeli authorities.

The chapter will primarily discuss how my interviewees experience the statements and actions of the Egyptian and Israeli authorities, as well as the Palestinian leadership. In other words the discourses and practices that are forced upon them from above. The next chapter will focus on how they relate to this, and how they use the discourses in their own lives.

The rights of Palestinians in Egypt:

Citizenship

Under Egyptian citizenship laws, citizenship is determined by Jus Sanguinis, that is inheritance. Because of this it is impossible to become an Egyptian citizen by naturalization, and this affects the Palestinian population in Egypt greatly, because they *"can't obtain the citizenship (.....). When both of your parents are Palestinian, it's impossible they say, it's no way to think about that"* (Interview Cairo 2009).

Family and kinship traditionally play an important role in Arab societies, and descent through the male line determines a person's identity according to these factors. When a woman marries she remains a member of her own kinship group, but she is also taken up as a member in her husband's kinship group, and she takes up some parts of his family's identity. Kinship is also central to the political system in most Arab countries, and the family is seen as the ideal basis of the nation (Joseph 1996). The importance of family, kinship and patriarchy is evident in Egyptian citizenship laws. The only option for someone who is born without Egyptian citizenship to gain it is through marriage, and it is only open for women. Traditionally the women enter their husband's families when they get married, and take on the husband's status, and this is also the case in Egypt, where women that are married to Egyptian men for a minimum of two years gain the right to Egyptian citizenship. This is not the case for men that are married to Egyptian women. Even more importantly citizenship is inherited from father to child. So if the father of the child is Egyptian, the child will automatically have Egyptian citizenship, while before 2005 children with Egyptian mothers did not get Egyptian citizenship (ElAbed 2009, interviews Cairo 2009).

The citizenship laws have a lot to say on the lives of the Palestinian people in Egypt, because as nationality is passed down from father to child, so is statelessness. Because of this it is not unusual to find people that have been living in Egypt all their lives, and still do not have

Egyptian citizenship. Indeed many of the Palestinians in Egypt have never even been to Palestine! A person is considered as a Palestinian by Egyptian law if the person's father's father was a Palestinian. This means that 3 of your grandparents might be Egyptian and have Egyptian citizenship, but you might still find yourself without citizenship, because the fourth of your grandparents was a stateless Palestinian (ElAbed 2009).

After Egypt signed the CEDAW¹-convention for elimination of discrimination of women the laws where changed. Today children of Egyptian mothers can apply for citizenship (ElAbed 2009, interviews). For children born by Egyptian mothers after 2005, getting Egyptian citizenship is a relatively uncomplicated process, but this far no Palestinian born before 2005 have been granted citizenship by the new law. This makes one of my interviewees state:

"I just have one question for the Egyptian government. Why do they give the nationality for any people, they say that if the mother is Egyptian, you can take the Egyptian nationality, but not for Palestinians?" (Interview Cairo 2009)

Ever since the massive expulsion of Palestinians from historical Palestine in 1948, the Arab League has emphasized that a solution to the Palestinian refugee problem must ensure the refugees' rights to return to their homes. The Arab League has advised national governments to defer efforts to settle Palestinians in their host-countries, and it has called on the UN to give the Palestinians the opportunity to return home (ElAbed 2009). In Egypt the government has followed the Arab League suggestions, by limiting the possibilities for Palestinians to get Egyptian citizenship as much as possible. For a long time the country was unwilling to sign the CEDAW-convention and one of the reasons given was that it would give many more Palestinians the right to obtain Egyptian citizenship. Even after the convention was signed they were slow to implement it in the case of Palestinians, and the cases of Palestinians that have applied for citizenship by the new law have been treated differently than the cases of people from other nationalities (ElAbed 2009, interviews Cairo 2009). This reflects the governments continued unwillingness to grant Egyptian citizenship to Palestinians.

Big sections of the Palestinian leadership in Egypt is agreeing with the government on this, and even putting pressure on them to stop Palestinians from getting Egyptian citizenship. I interviewed both the leader of the GUPW and the previous governor of Gaza city under Fatah authorities, and they both expressed their concern that Palestinians should not have other citizenships than the Palestinian citizenship. They were afraid that the Israeli government would say: *"Where is the Palestinian people? There is no Palestinian people, these people are Egyptian,*

1 CEDAW-treaty, conference on elimination of discrimination of women.

Lebanese and so on" (Interviews Cairo 2009).

The unwillingness to give Palestinians Egyptian citizenship has its root in the concept of "belonging as nationality". When the Jews first decided to make their homeland in historical Palestine, they emphasized the need of the Jewish nation to have their own sovereign homeland. At that time the idea of nationality was not as widespread in Palestine, and Palestinians could hardly be seen as a nation as such. At this time the Jews used the concept of "belonging as nationality" to explain why they belonged in historical Palestine, while the Palestinians did not belong there any more than in another part of the Arab world. Since they did not have a nationality that connected them to the land, they could just as well live in any other Arab country. It was these statements that the Arab League wanted to prove wrong, and they did so by stating that the Palestinians do not belong in their host-countries, but should return to their home-country at all costs. It became utmost important to construct a Palestinian national identity, in order to uphold the Palestinian claims to the land (ElAbed 2009, Swedenburg 2003).

In addition to this, the Egyptian government is treating nationality as synonymous with citizenship, and they fear that if the Palestinian people are granted citizenship to other countries than Palestine they will lose their Palestinian nationality, and thus the right to return to Palestine. Many of my interviewees however were careful about maintaining a division between citizenship and nationality. They stated that gaining a non-Palestinian citizenship would be a tool for them to make their daily life easier, but it would not change their nationality:

"I've got the Jordanian nationality. But I never say I'm a Jordanian. Never! I'm Palestinian, because Nablus is in Palestine. In my feelings I am Palestinian, so this passport is only to go to the airport, or some travels, nothing about my nationality, my belief or my actions." (Interview Cairo 2009)

The woman that made this statement says that she has the Jordanian nationality, and then later states that it has nothing to do with her nationality. This is because she, as most of my interviewees, uses the English term nationality to cover both nationality and citizenship, but she is still able to describe the difference between the two. If you exchange the word nationality with citizenship in the first sentence, the statement makes perfect sense.

However the same woman upheld some connection between nationality and citizenship. She is eligible to apply for Egyptian citizenship because she is married to an Egyptian man, but she wants to keep her Jordanian citizenship because she feels it is more in line with her nationality. She is originally from the West Bank, which was previously a part of Jordan, and as such her Jordanian citizenship reflects the fact that she is from the West Bank. However other people stated that there was no connection between their nationality and citizenship at all. To some degree these differences

arise from different experiences of not having Egyptian citizenship. Those who experienced severe difficulties were more likely to wish for Egyptian citizenship, yet denying that this had anything to do with their nationality.

Not having Egyptian citizenship has serious implications for people that are living in Egypt over time. Anyone who does not have Egyptian citizenship is regarded as a foreigner, and subject to special foreigner's regulations. The most important of these regulations applies to the fields of residence, work and education, even though there are many regulations regarding foreigner's activities in Egypt outside of these fields too.

Residency:

All foreigners in Egypt need a residence permit in order to stay legally in the country. Resident permits for Palestinians are valid for a period of 1 to 5 years according to the type of permit. People that do not have resident permits, or that fail to renew them in time can be subjected to deportation, or if deportation is impossible, they can be detained in prison. As an example of this I was told a story of a man who was 80 years old and had been living in Egypt for many years. He was originally from Palestine, but he did not have any opportunities to return to Palestine, and so he did not have any other choice than to stay in Egypt. Yet at the time of my fieldwork, he had lost his residence permit, thus being forced to stay illegally in Egypt, and as a consequence he had been spending several months in prison (Interview Cairo 2009).

This illustrates the severity of the consequences of not having a residence permit, but it also illustrates an important point in Egyptian immigration policies. It is not enough for an immigrant not to be able to leave the country. The immigrants are in Egypt on the approval of the authorities, and if the authorities withdraw their approval they are themselves responsible of finding somewhere else to go. This approach completely ignores the fact that many immigrants are not staying in Egypt out of their own free will. In the case of Palestinians they are mostly refugees or people that are trapped in Egypt by events far out of their own control.

There are several ways of obtaining an Egyptian residence permit. For those who have Egyptian mothers, wives or husbands, the process is relatively easy. The fact that their relatives are living in Egypt is considered enough reason for them to stay there. They have to pay to renew their permits every three to five years and the process can involve a lot of bureaucracy and bad treatment, but the permits are always granted within a reasonable time. This is opposed to people that apply for other reasons, where I heard about a man who had spent two years to get his residence permit, and then the permit was only valid for one year. (Interviews Cairo 2009).

Those who do not have close Egyptian relatives can gain a residence permit through their

work or studies in the country, or through a pension from the Egyptian government. Children whose parents have legal residence can also gain residence through their parents, and the same is true of people that have spouses with legal residence. For those who work in, or have pensions from, the government, gaining resident permits is not a big problem. Their work or pension is already documented because it is coming from the government, and from that follows their right to stay in the country. The few people who have formal employment in the private sector are also able to document their work without problems, and as such their reason to stay. But the majority of Palestinians in Egypt have informal employment. It is in the nature of such employment that it is difficult to document, because it usually happens without a contract, and the workers do not pay taxes or have insurance. In short, informal employment is employment that is either on the edge of what is legal or beyond it, and as such it does not constitute a reason to stay in the country. One option for people with informal employment is to get someone they know to state that they are working for them. This does not entail actual work, but is only a statement to the government in order to obtain the residence permit. Obtaining a residence permit in this way makes the holder very vulnerable every time the permit has to be renewed, because he is depending upon the other person to give him the papers, and this makes the power relations between the two very unequal thus opening for exploitation. Other options are having investment work in Egypt, or having considerable amounts of money in an Egyptian bank, but these options are both very expensive and thus not open for most Palestinians (ElAbed 2009, Interviews Cairo 2009).

The story of a young Palestinian man is a good example of the complexities of the regulations. His mother came to Egypt as a refugee just before he was born, and he has been living in Egypt the whole of his life. His mother has a pension from the Egyptian government, because his father was killed while serving in the Egyptian army, and that makes her eligible for a residence permit. Until he became 21 years old, he obtained his residence permit through his mother, but after that he has got to have legal work in order to obtain the permit. Because of financial constraints he quit school early and started doing different jobs in the informal sector. He has been working as a salesman in the markets, as a painter, and in a factory, but all these jobs were done without any contracts or other kind of formalization. Every time he has to renew his permit, he has got to find someone to verify to the government that he has got a job, even though he is not actually working for them. He told me that there is a lot of bureaucracy and long procedures involved in getting the permit, but as long as you are not politically active or working for liberating Palestine, you will always get it in the end (Interview Cairo 2009).

There are several interesting factors in this story. First of all he had all his childhood in Egypt, but when he turned 21 he was expected to find somewhere else to go if he could not obtain formal work. He does not have a residence permit in Palestine, and for the last few years he has

been unable to go there. The only way he could go to live in Palestine is by becoming an illegal immigrant there, yet he is expected by the Egyptian government to go and live in Palestine if he cannot find work in Egypt. As many other he gets his income from informal work, but for him it was not an option to move to Palestine. So he chose to find someone he knows to confirm for the government that he has a job. Off course this does not change the fact that he has not got a formal job, but it is the only way for him to be able to remain in the country legally. The whole procedure of getting someone to confirm that he has a job, even though he does not is off course not how the laws are meant to work, but it is usually not a basis for rejecting the application. However if you are politically active, working for liberating Palestine, or doing something else that the government does not like, they can easily deny you a permit on these grounds. Thus it gives the government an opportunity to strike down on activities that they do not like, even if they are not illegal.

Work:

There are many regulations regarding work for foreigners in Egypt. In the past, Palestinians were exempted from most of these regulations, but today that is not the case anymore. All foreigners have to obtain work-permits to work in the formal sector, and there is a tight regulation on which professions it is possible to obtain permits within.

Since 1978 employment of foreigners in the public sector has been subject to principles of reciprocity. That is, for every foreigner employed by the Egyptian government, the foreigner's home-country has to employ an Egyptian citizen. This is effectively banning stateless people from having jobs in the public sector, because they have no state that can employ Egyptians "back home". In effect people with Palestinian citizenship are usually affected too, because the Palestinian government is too small to employ a considerable amount of foreigners. Those who were employed in the public sector before the law was enacted were able to keep their jobs and the benefits that follow from them, but no new work-permits for public sector jobs are given out to Palestinians today (ElAbed 2009, interviews Cairo 2009).

In the private sector the regulations are also very strict. Work permits are only granted within certain, usually low skilled, professions, such as for example painters, salesmen or factory workers. For example Palestinian students graduating from the Pharmacy-college cannot obtain work-permits within their professions. The only way they can obtain work-permits is if they decide to work in a different sector from the one they are educated in, usually an unskilled sector. This is also the case with many other university graduates (ElAbed 2009, interviews Cairo 2009).

Another important regulation is the law that states that no company in the private sector is allowed to have more than 10 % foreign employees. In addition the law requires foreigners to have health insurance. This is a major problem, because most companies do not grant health insurance to

their workers, and before they can grant insurance to a foreign worker, they have to grant insurance to 9 Egyptians. So if a company wants to employ 10 % foreigners, as the law allows them to, they have to provide all their workers with insurance. This is off course a major expense for the companies, and so they prefer to hire only Egyptians. If they do hire foreigners, they only hire high-skilled workers that are difficult to find among Egyptians (ElAbed 2009, interviews Cairo 2009).

Because of these limitations, many Palestinians are not able to find formal work in Egypt. In most cases these people are forced to take up informal work. Informal work is work that is not regulated by the government. In most developed countries this is strictly illegal, but because of the government's failure to formalize big parts of the private sector, it is accepted in a lot of underdeveloped countries. It is estimated that more than 50 % of the non-agricultural workforce in Egypt work in the informal sector², and for Palestinians the percentage is even higher. A young journalist explained her work like this:

"I didn't obtain a work permit till now, and I didn't even try to get it. If I'm going to work in school for example, or in any governmental institutions, I have to have the work permit. - But in private institutions you don't? - No, they didn't ask me about anything. I mean, I didn't even sign a contract." (Interview Cairo 2009)

This is a typical example of informal work, where the employers do not ask about papers from the employee, and in return the employee is expected to work without a contract. Often this kind of work does not make the employee eligible for a pension or a sick leave and the job security is very low. Another interviewee phrased it this way: *"...they (Palestinians) sometimes have to work with less legitimacy than other workers"* (Interview Cairo 2009). In this example being Palestinian means being on the outside, not being able to make any demands. For the journalist, just the fact that she is a Palestinian means that she has no hope of getting a work permit, or any of the benefits that comes with it. In this way, the laws are confirming her role as an outsider, someone who does not have the same rights as the insiders.

Not being able to get formal work also means to have to accept work at a lower pay. A graduate from a business school told me that she had severe troubles finding a job after she graduated. After a while she got a position as a secretary in an institution she liked, and she was very happy about it, but as she started working there she felt that her work was not properly valued. Because she is not able to find work in other places, she has to accept a salary much lower than she would have if she could find any formal work. And even after working full time in the same place for 6 years, she is still depending on her parents for her living, because her salary is too small for her to live on her own (Interview Cairo 2009).

2 <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2004/711/ec1.htm>

A student told me that he did not have any motivation for studying well, because: *"If I get high grades, I will not be appointed in the University. I cannot be appointed as a professor. It cannot happen, because I am a Palestinian."* (Interview Cairo 2009).

I also spoke with some women that had given up finding work completely and were depending on their husbands for a living. They had taken up volunteer work to keep themselves occupied, because they were unable to find any paid jobs. One of them also explained that she went abroad when she finished her studies because of the lack of job opportunities for her in Egypt, and when she came back she decided not to take up any formal work.

Education

Foreigners are not allowed to enter public schools in Egypt. Exceptions can be made, but then they have to pay school fees. And even in private schools, foreigners have to pay much more school fees than Egyptian nationals.

"My colleges used to pay 40 pounds, I paid 150 sometimes 200, in that range. But they paid 30 or 40 or something like that, so the gap is wide." (Interview Cairo 2009)

"After that (primary school) I entered preparatory school. It was a governmental school, but they didn't accept me, because I'm a Palestinian." (Interview Cairo 2009)

The second quote illustrates something that was quite common among my interviewees. The girl in the story was first accepted into the school, because the administration did not know that she was a Palestinian, but when they found out, they asked her to find another school. Stories like this were quite common among my interviewees, because they are so similar to Egyptians in every way. It is just their papers that make them different, and because of this it is first when they show their papers or other signs that they are Palestinian, that they are refused admission. This serves to underline the fact that their Palestinian nationality is what keeps them on the outside and that without it they would have been accepted to a much higher degree.

The high school fees are a big problem for many of the Palestinian families with a low income. There are regulations that allow some Palestinians to pay less school fees and the Palestinian embassy sometimes help poorer families pay their school fees, but education is still too expensive for many and some has to wait too long for help. A father told me about the problems his family have had with the school fees. He told me that since his children's mother has Egyptian citizenship, they only have to pay 10% of the foreigner's school fees, but they still pay ten times as much as Egyptians. Just to pay for the education of the family's children has cost them more than £E 35000, approximately two times the families total income for one year. Now this is a problem for one of his daughters. She wishes to take a masters degree, but they cannot afford the school fees.

He has applied to the embassy to help him pay, but this takes a long time. Her semester started several months before I met the family, but because they had not paid the school fees, she could not go to class (Interview Cairo 2009).

Another interviewee tried to take an English course beside her work, but she found that foreigners had to pay in US\$ or British pounds, so she ended up not taking the course, but tried to learn by herself instead. Because the government want an inflow of US\$ and British pounds, they try to make foreigners pay for things in these currencies whenever they can. But these currencies are not readily available for poor Palestinians, so this is another source of problems for many families (Interview Cairo 2009).

Higher school fees is not the only problem Palestinians can face in their education:

"When I finished school, I tried to go to the sports college. It was my dream, and I was playing basketball. I went there and took all exams, and I passed. They thought I was Egyptian, because I look like them, but in the end, they said: "Oh, you are Palestinian, you will have to wait for the next year." And I had two choices, either I had to go to another school or I had to wait for the next year, so I chose the other school, because of the waiting." (Interview Cairo 2009)

This is another example of a Palestinian that was accepted into school as an Egyptian, but was denied entry when the administration found out that she was Palestinian. In this case it ruined her dream of being able to have an occupation she liked, and today she is working in a job she does not like very much.

As illustrated by the many examples above, Palestinians are experiencing different kinds of marginalization in many areas of their daily life. And this marginalization is specifically connected to their Palestinian identity and does not appear as long as they are not identified as Palestinians. The moment they show their Palestinian identity they are marked as different, and not belonging in Egypt. In the words of Kagan (2007, p.6) they are “...*deliberately blocked from integration in host countries in order to serve a political agenda*”.

As earlier discussed, notions of home-country and host-country are important elements in the nationalist discourse. As long as Palestine is represented as the home-country and Egypt as the host-country this will have big impacts lives of Palestinians in Egypt. This representation constructs Palestinians as guests in Egypt, and because they are guests they have to behave like guests and be treated like guests. The idea behind this metaphor is that when they had nowhere else to go Egypt accepted them as her guests. And as guests they should either be grateful to their host or leave. They cannot enjoy the same rights as Egyptians, because the Egyptian people are already struggling, and the government have to take care of their own people first. They are nice with their guests and always try to help them, but as guests they have to come second to the Egyptian people. This metaphor is very important to the Egyptian government, because the subject positions it constructs

for the government and the Palestinians put the government in a very beneficial position. According to this metaphor they are the good hosts, and this is important for them. Because the Palestinian cause has a lot of support among the Egyptian people it is important for the government to portray themselves as friendly to the Palestinians as possible (Interviews and observation Cairo 2009).

At the same time, the Palestinian cause is a very sensitive cause that has the potential to create a popular uprising against the government. Egypt can be seen as a bomb waiting to go off because of the decreasing circumstances for a majority of the population. Unemployment and poverty is increasing, and the salaries of unskilled workers are losing their worth. At the same time the government has gone from the widely popular government of Gamal Abd ElNasser, who also had in it a promise of democracy, to the widely unpopular government of Mubarak, who is suspected to lay the grounds for his son to follow him as president³. Violence and big demonstrations are uncommon in today's Egypt, and many Egyptians view their own security as a good reason for things to stay as they are. But the frustration with the government is growing, and the Palestinian cause is a cause who could potentially build on this frustration and grow into a mass uproar against the government. Palestinian issues have caused some of the biggest demonstration in newer Egyptian history, and such demonstrations have always been met with severe violence from the police (Interviews Cairo 2009, news articles⁴). Another example that the Palestinian cause is seen by a sensitive cause became evident for me when I was looking for literature on Palestinians in Egypt. I was told that the American University in Cairo does not have any researchers working with Palestinians in Egypt, because the last research they facilitated on this field was abolished by the government half way through, and the researcher was subsequently denied entrance to Egypt⁵

My interviewees were very unwilling to speak their opinions of the Egyptian state directly, yet the picture of the state that they painted through their stories is clear. The Egyptian state is seen as a merciless state, a cold machine with no compassion for human feelings. This is illustrated through the story of the old man in prison. The government does not take his lack of options into consideration, neither do they care about his old age, they judge him for a crime he committed, without asking themselves whether the laws are reasonable or whether he had any chance to follow

3 <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/5529166/> read on the 28th of August 2010

4 <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/120912.html> read on the 28th of August 2010

<http://palestinenote.com/cs/blogs/news/archive/2010/06/13/egypt-cracks-down-on-anti-police-brutality-protests.aspx> read on the 28th of August 2010

5 Conversation with Sara Sadek, outreach program coordinator for the Center for Migration and Refugee Studies at the American University in Cairo.

them. The histories of the families that are struggling to pay their children's school fees and the people that cannot get enough work to provide for themselves because of the government's regulation also tell about the same. A state that follows a bigger political scheme with no considerations for the people that are stuck in the middle.

In terms of citizenship, residency, employment and education the Palestinians in Egypt are clearly constructed as outsiders. They are subjected to the same rules as all foreigners, and in the case of Palestinians with Egyptian mothers applying for citizenship, their applications are treated even stricter than the applications of people with other nationalities. They are clearly constructed as a group that does not belong in Egypt, and the emphasis on returning to Palestine is clear.

Palestine and the dream of return

Many Palestinians that went to Egypt as a result of the conflicts were hardly able to take with the anything when leaving. The ones who left as refugees were moving in a big hurry, and could only bring what they could carry immediately. Assets such as farm land, social networks, knowledge of the area and so on could not be transferred, and so all of these assets were lost when the family moved. For some this meant that they had to start their new lives with very small means, and for them, Palestine represents not only their "home-land", but much more importantly, it represents all their material and social assets. And even though these assets would not be returned to them automatically if they return to Palestine, the dream of return is still representing a dream of getting back what they lost. In addition the fact that they lost so much when they left the land is proving that the land was important to them and thus that they are in need of it (Interviews Cairo 2009).

Those who left Palestine during the war of 1948 were expecting their leaves to be short. They were told that the Arab armies would come in and take their lands back within short time, and that they just had to get out of the way for a small period. Many of the families kept the keys to their houses, and hoped to return soon:

"My grandmother still has the key to her house. She dreamed that one day she will return, and she kept the furniture to the house." (Interview Cairo 2009)

The Arab armies did not win the war, and those who left were never able to come back to what became Israeli territory. They are not unable to return because they are in danger at their places of origin, but because the new government has decided as a matter of policy to forbid their return. They are not Jewish, and because of that they are not wanted by the Israeli government that aims to build and maintain a Jewish state (Kagan 2007).

Following the end of the 1948-war, the Israeli authorities immediately sought to normalize the displacement of the Palestinian refugees through expropriation of their lands. Land was vitally

important for the Zionist ambitions in Mandate Palestine, and it continued to be important in Israel after the war. It was the physical basis of new settlements and the territorial basis of the new state. In the mandate period this happened through purchase on the open market by the Jewish National Fund (JNF), but immediately following the war, only about 13,5% of the Israeli territories were under Jewish or state ownership. At the same time the Arab population had diminished from about 850000 to about 160000 as a result of the war, while Jewish immigration was surging. The lack of Jewish land ownership was seen as a problematic by the new Israeli leadership. Palestinian refugee land was seen as vital for securing state interests, and, through the use of new legislations, the leadership strove to gain possession and ownership of as much of the new territories as possible (Forman & Kedar 2003).

The estimates of how much land Palestinians lost due to the war is highly inaccurate and contested, but it is clear that they lost millions of dunams of land, and that most of the land was acquired by Israel through force. After the war, Haganah took to securing the lands and soon started cultivating them, and in June 1948 the first Arab lands were allocated to Jews for cultivation. Normalization of the seizure started almost immediately, through reclassification of the land as abandoned and later "absentee land". These properties then came under state administration, and in 1960 they were finally reclassified as "Israel land". This is land that is owned by the Israeli people. It can never be sold, but it can be leased out for shorter or longer periods. In theory parts of the land can be leased to all Israeli citizen, but in practice, almost all the land is leased to Jews (Forman & Kedar 2003).

The reclassification of the land as abandoned property and later "absentee land" were important steps in shaping the discourse around these lands. The new labels did not entail any notion of who the owners of the land were, or why they were absent. It simply stated that the owner was absent, and as such had no claims to the land. By mentioning the previous owners of the land as little as possible, and classifying them as absentees, the Israeli authorities effectively normalized their displacement and dispossession. My interviewees were clearly upset by this. One of them told me about her grandmother that left as a refugee in 1948:

"She visited the house five years ago, and it was a Jewish family who lived there. They expropriated the house without even informing my family, so the house is still there."
(Interview Cairo 2009)

At one side it was good to see that the family's house was still intact, but at the same time, experiencing the dispossession personally made it more real to her. The family must have known that the house would be occupied by someone else, but seeing it themselves made it come true in a different way. By telling me this story, my interviewee also wanted to make it clear how unfair the

situation was to them. They had never sold the house, or even been informed that anyone else had taken it over, they had simply been absent from it because they had no way of returning, and now they were treated as if they had left the house without caring about what would happen to it.

Many of the people who left Palestine later also believed their absence would be short. The most extreme story I heard was that of a girl who left with her mother to Egypt from Gaza in order to visit her father. This was in 1970, and they were only supposed to stay in Egypt for their holiday, but during their stay the political situation changed and they were unable to go back. Today the girl is a grown up woman, and she is still staying in Egypt. She has visited Gaza several times, but she has not been able to go back and live in Gaza, even though she has tried. Her mother died still waiting to go back (Interviews Cairo 2009).

This is yet another story of people that did not want to leave their land, but was forced to do so. This time they did not leave as refugees, but was denied the right to come back after a short visit in Egypt. This was a very important point for this woman to stress, and she also stressed that she had tried returning to Gaza several times, but the circumstances has made it impossible for her to stay there permanently.

The dream of return was something all of my interviewees had in common. Not all of them wanted to return to Palestine permanently and live their lives there, but all of my interviewees shared the longing to be able to go freely to Palestine, either to stay there permanently, or just for visits. It was common to claim that *"Everybody dreams to go back"*, especially among elder people with more assets. For them the dream of return was seen almost as an inevitable part of being Palestinian. According to Peteet (2007) the past represent what have been denied to the Palestinian refugees, a safe location, recognition of their rights, a sense of belonging in one's own homeland and a process of justice. The dream of return is not only a dream of returning to the land, but a dream of getting back what was lost.

Some of the younger people did not share the elders wish to live in Palestine, they told me that they wanted to visit Palestine, but they have their lives in Egypt. They grew up in Egypt, they have their friends and their work in Egypt, and they do not have those things in Palestine. In addition they are more similar to Egyptians in many ways, they speak the Egyptian language, and they have grown up in an Egyptian environment. Yet they shared the dream of return, not as an actual wish of going back, but as an obligation they shared as members of the community. It was an obligation to fight for their rights, that they had to fulfil to be accepted as true Palestinians.

Being Palestinian is a master signifier that obtains specific meanings within specific discourses. Within the prevalent discourses of the PLO-institutions all Palestinians dream of return to Palestine, so in order for people to qualify as Palestinians within that discourse, they have to

share the dream. The PLO-institutions are important institutions within my case, and their power stretched far in terms of defining “the true Palestinian” within the community. By entering the PLO-institutions, the Palestinians have to relate to their discourse, thus supporting the discourse, by acting in compliance with it. For some the dream of return was a dream they had to support in order to fit into the definition of a “true Palestinian” within the PLO-discourse, but that did not play an important part in their lives outside of the institutions.

The representatives of the PLO-institutions did not mention where in Palestine they wanted people to return to, and they did not emphasize if people should return to their original lands, or if they could return to any place in Palestine. Yet, for several of the other people I spoke with this was a very important question:

"..... it became equal for them, Cairo to a city in the West Bank or Gaza. They were not going to return, except for to Jaffa." (Interview Cairo 2009)

"We are from Ramla. And Ramla is now in Israel. You know 48. Now I am staying in Egypt and my cousins are in Palestine, they are not in Ramla. They are in Gaza. And if I return, I will not return to Gaza, it's not my country anyway, so either way I'm not living in my country, you understand? If I return I will return to Ramla." (Interview Cairo 2009)

"Gaza is beautiful, but it's not my country." (Interview Cairo 2009)

These statements all emphasize that it is not as much about returning to Palestine, as about returning to where their families originally came from. It was very important to these people that I understood that, because the attempts at creating lasting peace agreements between Palestine and Israel have never treated this issue. The only provision that have been made for people to return allowed them to return to Gaza or the West Bank and this was not considered enough. These people were not interested in going to Gaza or the West Bank, because they had nothing to go to in these places. Any real opportunity for them to settle in Gaza or the West Bank, might even be seen as a threat against their livelihood, because it might be used by the Egyptian government to stop them from staying in Egypt. A return to the families original lands also encompassed an idea that they would be compensated for what they lost when they left the land, and the ideal would be that they would get back the same houses and the same farmlands that their family were owning before they left. Primarily then, the emphasis on returning to the families original land can be seen as an emphasis that they will not return unless they actually have something to return to, thus ensuring that they will not leave what they have in Egypt without knowing what they will get in Palestine. Secondly it can also be seen as a way of explaining why they are staying in Egypt without attempting to move to Palestine, at the same time as they claim that they are dreaming about living in Palestine. Many

interviewees emphasized that they would live in Palestine “*if the conditions were good*”, thus explaining why they had not gone there already. Ever since 1948 it has been impossible for any Palestinians that left the new Israeli territories to go back to live there, and by emphasizing that they want to live in these places, they at the same time explain why they are still staying in Egypt. This is also emphasized by Peteet (2007), who claims that the right to return does not mean that the Palestinians would actually return if given the possibility. Their return depends on economic and other relations, as well as relations to the host-country.

For those who did not want to live in Palestine, visiting Palestine was an important goal, and for those who had been there, they saw the visits as major events in their lives. A young woman told me that she went to Palestine once when she was 6 years old, and I asked her if she remembered anything from it. She answered: “ – *Of course. I remember more from that period than I remember from the whole of my childhood*” (Interview Cairo 2009). Several other people told me that when they were visiting they felt at home there, and they did not want to leave again:

“I was a child, the first time I went there I was 10 years old, and time second time I was around twelve. Even when I moved around in Nablus, the old city, I had a feeling, like I want to run in the streets, all over the place, and the mountains was really amazing, like green mountains, we don't have that here. So everything was like, I didn't want to leave. It was different, the place.” (Interview Cairo 2009)

“...when I was there, I felt that when they knew that this Palestinian group is coming from Egypt, that they treat us differently, they let us get to know the country more than the others. If it was any other visitor, they could welcome him, but in addition to welcoming us they let us get to know the country, as if they're telling us this place is yours, you're one of us.” (Interview Cairo 2009)

The places they were visiting were seen as more “homely” than they places where they live in Egypt. Because they have been hearing that they are guests in Egypt all their lives, it became a good experience for them to come to Palestine and hear that they were at home. It became easier to come to terms with the fact that people treat them like guests in Egypt, by experiencing that people were treating them as if they were at home somewhere else.

In the nationalist discourse, the belonging in the national homeland is seen as something natural. Just as a tree belongs in the soil where it first grew, people belong in their national homelands. If they move they will suffer from a lack of roots in their new land, and to the people I spoke with, Palestine represents a homeland where they can find those roots again.

Connections to the Palestine of today

Many Palestinians in Egypt still have family in Palestine, and those who had been there were very excited about meeting their families. Some had not seen close relatives in many years, and for

others it was their first time to meet some of their family members:

“All the people came to my uncle’s house to see me and to see my father after 25 years”
(Interview Cairo 2009).

A woman whose family are originally from the West Bank told me about when she was visiting a village in the West Bank, and she was walking in the streets with her son and daughter. From far away she saw a woman with a Palestinian dress, and she said that this is a real Palestinian lady, walking very straight and very nice. When they came closer to each other she looked at her face, and saw that it was similar to her own, and she said: *"You are my aunt."* The woman asked her about her name, and confirmed that she was her aunt. Another time, at a conference they were attending, a man was asking for her, and she thought it was something about her being with the union. But the man recognized her name, and he said he was her cousin. She had not seen him before, but because of the name he knew that she was his cousin, and he was walking with her the rest of the time she stayed in that place (Interview Cairo 2009).

For these people, the question of whether or not the Palestinians should be allowed to return to Palestine is not only about nationality, it is about fulfilling a dream of justice, getting back previously owned assets and about having the possibility to live close to friends and relatives.

When it comes to visiting Palestine, this is also an issue. For these people, visiting Palestine is not about some abstract ideas about visiting their homeland. It is about visiting actual friends and relatives. In other words, they are not going to Palestine exclusively to visit the Palestinian nation, see the Palestinian cultural traditions, experience the Palestinian society or anything like that. These things are important for many, and they might be reasons to visit Palestine, but the strongest reason why people want to visit Palestine is more often because they want to visit family and friends living in the Palestinian territories.

It is everything but easy for Palestinians in Egypt to visit relatives in Palestine. Visiting the West Bank is possible, but only with a visa from the Israeli authorities. The procedures are complicated and obtaining a visa is very difficult. This is often regarded as deeply unfair:

"Visa is a big problem. Everybody from outside West Bank are allowed to visit Palestine. Anyone from another nationality can visit, but not us." (Interview Cairo 2009)

A volunteer in the GUPWom with relatives in the West Bank told me that none of her sisters and brothers had been able to go to the West Bank. She had only been able to go herself because she went on the behalf of the GUPWom and a representative for the Palestinian Authorities fixed the visa for her (Interview Cairo 2009).

For Palestinians to enter Gaza a visitors permit from the Israeli government that can only be obtained through an invitation from a family member is a necessary prerequisite. An interviewee that had been there a number of times visiting his family, told me that the possibility to enter was arbitrary and dependent on personal relations. He once had a fight with an officer, and as a consequence he was denied entry for almost 10 year, thus missing his sister's funeral. Since the Gaza-blockade following Hamas take over in Gaza visiting has become very difficult. My interviewee had tried getting a visitors permit several times, but he had not succeeded (Interview Cairo 2009). Again, the actions of the Palestinians in Egypt are tightly regulated by events far out of their own control and the rules that limit their actions are often implemented arbitrarily and on the basis of personal relations.

To enter any parts of Palestine, a visa from the Israeli government is required, but not everybody is willing to apply to the Israeli government to visit their own country. The possibilities for entering has also been severely restricted since the second intifada, and several people that had been visiting before the intifada reported that it was impossible for them to go there now (Interviews Cairo 2009).

The uncertainty and conflict in the Palestinian areas make visiting even more difficult. For example a person might spend a lot of time and efforts gaining a visitors or residence permit, only to be unable to go because of new conflicts. And even worse is the uncertainty about what is happening with friends and relatives (Interviews Cairo 2009).

One of the questions I asked all my interviewees was how the Palestinians-Israeli conflict is affecting their own life, and almost all of them answered that it had a huge effect on them, because they were frightened about what might happen with friends and relatives. One of them explained it like this:

"The kids' uncles are living there, and one of them had his house demolished, and one of them was injured. Sometimes people have heart attacks, but they can't come to Egypt, and they can't go to the West Bank to be cured, and one of our relatives died because of this. We are always shattered by the news." (Interview Cairo 2009)

The focus on the news was very important for many, they are "*dealing with news like water and air*" and "*If you find any news about Palestine, it catches your attention automatically*". A young man told me that he used to watch the news instead of watching movies, and when other youths were going to the internet to chat with their friends, he would go to forums to talk about the conflict (Interviews Cairo 2009).

This focus on what is happening in Palestine can be interpreted as a result of looking at the nation as an imagined community, where it becomes necessary to feel empathy with everybody within the community. In this way what happens to the other members of the community becomes

very important, because if the circumstances were different it could just as well have happened to themselves. Yet my interviewees expressed the care for their friends and family as the main reasons why they worried so much about what happened in Palestine. The differences between these two ways of interpreting the situation is very important, and this can be illustrated by an example from a young Palestinian that did not have as many personal ties to people in Palestine. He told me that for a certain period he had been very upset every time he heard some bad news about Palestine.

Because of his feelings for the country and the Palestinian people, the news about Palestine seemed to touch him much deeper than the news from other places. But because of the continued violence in Palestine, and the never ending stream of bad news, he had to stop thinking like this, and in the end he did not want to watch news about Palestine any more (Interview Cairo 2009).

His story stands in sharp contrast to the stories of the people that always wanted to watch the news and know what was going on. These people were looking for news about their own friends and relatives, and every time they learned that the violence had been in a different area from where their connections lived, or in other ways knew that they were not involved, they were able to relax and not let the news reach them on a personal level.

Palestine represents many things to the Palestinians in Egypt, and although the representation of Palestine is probably the most important, it is not the only one. It is also a place where family and friends are living, that can be visited. It is important to know what is going on in Palestine, not only because it is the home-land, but because what happens there happens to friends and family. It is also important because it has the possibility to impact their own lives directly, as it has done so many times before.

The representation of Palestine as a home-land obtains much of its importance through being a central element in the Palestinian fight for justice. The loss of the home-land represents the loss of personal assets, legal rights and justice, and the dream of return is also a dream of getting back those assets.

ElAbed (2009) claims that for some Palestinians in Egypt, Palestine does not represent much more than a force that is keeping them from full integration in Egypt. In my case this representation of Palestine is existing, but in a very ambivalent form. This is because I have chosen interviewees that have chosen a focus on the positive effects of Palestine in their lives, and thus it cannot be represented as a totally negative force. They have experienced that a specific interpretation of Palestine has a negative impact on their lives, yet they still believe that another interpretation can have positive effects. Their experiences are clearly affected by the decisions of both the Egyptian and Israeli authorities, as they have to live with the consequences of these decisions every day. And

these decisions are not determined by concerns for the well-being of Palestinians in Egypt, but can be better understood as the result of a long-lasting ideological conflict where the discourse of “belonging as nationality” plays a leading role. The experiences of my interviewees show that the discourse of “belonging as nationality” has been used, in whatever way it was found beneficial by the sitting governments of Egypt and Israel, to both describe relationship of Palestinians to Egypt and Palestine, and to determine their rights in those countries. In the next chapter I will explore further the impact this has on my interviewees and how they react to it through active use and rejection of the discourse of “belonging as nationality”

Chapter 6:

Living in between and the struggle for belonging

The metaphors of home-country and host-country are important in constructing a Palestinian identity in Egypt. They are important both because the policies of the Egyptian and Israeli authorities make them important, and because the PLO-organisations put so much emphasis on returning to the home-country. This is affecting the lives of Palestinians in Egypt through the policies of the Israeli and Egyptian government. These policies are regulating what they can and cannot do to a very large extent and this has grave impact on their lives. The biggest consequences, however, are only visible when looking at the combined effects of Egyptian and Israeli laws. As I have argued in the previous chapter these laws are drawing on the discourse of “belonging as nationality”, and in this chapter I will discuss the following question:

- How are my interviewees experiencing and reacting to “belonging as nationality” in their daily lives?

The discourse of “belonging as nationality” and the metaphors of home-land and host-country are forced on my interviewees from above through the laws that govern their lives, but my interviewees have also taken an active stand themselves, by using the discourse actively at certain times and discarding it at other times. Outwardly they accept and embrace the discourse, they have all joined their respective organizations because the discourse of the organizations have a certain appeal to them. To a some extent it can help them understand their experiences and go on with their lives, but for the explanations they can find within the discourse are sometimes omitting important issues in their lives. Problems that are limited to the poorer classes are not important issues within the discourse, they are disregarded with statements such as “*the government is doing its best to help*”, or the embassy or the other PLO-institutions (Interviews Cairo 2009). Because of this, most of my interviewees were only accepting parts of the discourse, and they were looking for answers and actions outside of the “belonging as nationality” discourse whenever that made more sense to them. Although they accepted the discourse within certain forums, they rejected it and even opposed it in other forums.

This chapter will open with a discussion on the difficulties of being stateless. This creates major formal problems for those who suffer from it, and it can also create a profound sense of lack of belonging. I will begin by addressing the formal problems of being stateless, and after that go on to address the lack of belonging that this creates. My interviewees are reacting differently to this. A

major strategy is to create stronger bonds to Palestine in order to cope with the lack of belonging to Egypt. This strategy is clearly utilizing the discourse of "belonging as nationality", and I will discuss both positive and negative effects from it. In the end of the chapter I will discuss a few alternative strategies for coping with the lack of belonging, that both utilizes the discourse of "belonging as nationality" and rejects or oppose it.

Being stateless

Citizenship gives certain rights to the holders, for example the right to live in a states territory, the right to work in the state, and inclusion in the state's well fare system. Being stateless means not enjoying these rights.

There are 5 types of documents for stateless Palestinians. The first is for people who are residing in the West Bank and in Gaza. The second is an Egyptian document for people that left Gaza after 1967. The third is for those who went to Jordan, they have two year documents from the Jordanian authorities. The fourth is for those ones who went to Lebanon, and the fifth those who went to Syria (Interview Cairo 2009).

Most of my interviewees hold Egyptian travel documents, and some hold both Egyptian travel documents and other papers. The travel documents look much like Egyptian passports, but they clearly states that the holders are Palestinian, and they do not give the same rights as Egyptian passports. As the name implies it is an ID document used as a passport when travelling and for other purposes where a passport is needed, but it does not entail Egyptian citizenship. The Egyptian document does not give the holder the right to live and work in Egypt, and the holder is not included in the Egyptian well fare system. The holder has to apply separately to be able to live and work in the country, and have to pay extra fees to enjoy public services, like education. In addition the holder of an Egyptian travel document is not automatically allowed entry to Egypt (ElAbed 2009, Interviews Cairo 2009).

If the holder of an Egyptian travel document leaves Egypt for more than 6 months, he loses the residence permit and cannot come back. If he wants to be staying out of Egypt for more than 6 months he has to apply to get a special permit, and even then he has to return to Egypt within a year. This makes it hard to work in the Gulf for example, because if someone goes to the Gulf to work, when his contract ends and he is supposed to go back, Egypt will not allow him to enter. Because of this the companies prefer to employ workers with other documents who do not have this problem. It is also a big problem for people that left Gaza in 1967 and went to other countries than Egypt. Most of them have Egyptian documents, but they cannot come to Egypt now, and some people have been staying at airports for many months because no country would allow them to enter (ElAbed 2009, Interviews Cairo 2009). In the Gulf Crisis of 1990-91 this got severe consequences for the

Palestinian holders of Egyptian travel documents that were residing in Iraq. Following the allied victory over Iraq, thousands of Palestinians were either expelled from the Gulf States or left on their own. As a result, about 30 000 Palestinians stranded in Kuwait and were not accepted as residents by any state. Most of them were people with Egyptian documents. In 1995 something slightly similar happened to Palestinians residing in Libya, when the Libyan leader Muammar AlQadhafi made a political statement that Palestinians should return to Palestine by expelling about 1000 Palestinians with Egyptian travel documents and leaving them on the Egyptian-Libyan border. Some of them were able to enter Egypt or other countries, but several hundreds remained stranded at the border for two years, until Qadhafi allowed them to re-enter Libya (ElAbed 2009).

Another problem of being stateless is that of travelling. To cross international borders one needs a valid passport that grants access to the country one is entering. But the Egyptian travel document grants access to very few countries and applying for a visa can be a difficult process. A young Palestinian woman told me that in order to obtain a visa, she first has to get a document from the Israeli government, and then she has to go back to Cairo to apply for the Visa. The only exceptions are a few Middle Eastern countries where she can go without a visa, but even there, there are problems:

"When we were trying to travel to Algeria the first time (....) They checked the papers, and they said it was ok, you will travel, your passport is ok. But when they saw that we had a transit through France, they made all of us go back. They took the ticket from us. I mean, they checked in our luggage and everything, but when they saw that we had a transit through France, they said that we couldn't go." (Interview Cairo 2009)

Even when staying in Egypt lacking Egyptian citizenship can cause problems moving about and fulfilling everyday tasks. According to Egyptian law everybody has to carry their personal identification when going out. For this purpose every Egyptian citizen over 18 years of age have an official ID-card, but those ID-cards are only given out to citizens. Non-citizens have to carry other forms of identification, usually their passports. As an interviewee explained this can easily cause problems:

"...it's very difficult to go out with your passport, because if you lose it you will spend a lot of money, and a lot of time to obtain a new." (Interview Cairo 2009)

When travelling around Egypt, and especially in the Sinai, it is necessary to pass a lot of checkpoints where foreigners are required to show their passports. This can potentially cause problems for Palestinian people, because as a group, they are seen as a security risk by the Egyptian state. For a young man travelling through the Sinai his passport caused him to be detained by the police for several hours, because when they saw that he was Palestinian, they wanted to check him out much more thoroughly than what is usual. This was a person that was dependent on travelling a

lot to obtain work, but he told me he has almost given up travelling around Egypt because it causes him so many problems.

All in all the Egyptian travel documents does not give the holders the right to be treated as Egyptian nationals, and even though it is an ID document in line with a passport, it does not give any of the rights following from a citizenship. In some cases it even draws suspicion to the holders, because it points them out as members of a group which is considered a security risk.

Living in between.

Apart from the formal effects of being stateless, like not having the rights of citizenship, and difficulties with travel, being stateless also have psychological effects. Many interviewees used their nationality to understand their feelings of not belonging. For example a young man told me that he had been called in to do army service, but he was afraid that his Palestinian background might cause him problems.

"Because I entered Palestine, there is some reasons or security rules that I can't enter the army, just because I entered Palestine. And my mother is a Palestinian, even if I'm not. If my mother wasn't a Palestinian, maybe they would say ok, we can take him, but especially Palestinians, they don't take them."

According to this man everybody who has entered Palestine is seen by the government as posing a security risk, and because of this he should not enter the military. This rule is not always followed, but because his mother is Palestinian that should also exclude him from the military. Because of this he is very surprised that they have called him in to join the army. At the time of my fieldwork, he did not enter the army yet, but he was afraid of what might happen when he enters and they realize that he is Palestinian. He was convinced that his Palestinians background made him different from the other recruits and singled him out as a security risk.

Because of the hegemonic status of the "belonging as nationality" discourse when discussing the rights of Palestinians in Egypt, many of my interviewees felt that they did not belong there. An Arabic term much used to describe this feeling is Ghurba. The word Ghurba means exile or being away from the homeland, being a stranger separated from ones familiar home or being a foreigner. It is commonly used to refer to all Palestinians living outside of Palestine, and has often been translated to mean diaspora.

Diaspora is a very wide term that refers to people from one place of origin, or a home-land, that are scattered across several places, yet they retain an identity and community tied to the home-land. The term is very wide, and somewhat diffuse, and have been said to carry the risk of being "semantically overloaded". Diasporas can be caused by voluntary or forced mass-movements, but not all mass-movements are diasporas, and it can be difficult to determine if a migrant community

can be determined as a diasporic community or not. In the case of the Palestinian population, they have some characteristics that qualify them as a diaspora and some that disqualifies them, but the fact remains that to live outside of one's home-land is important for identity formation, and the term diaspora might be useful to understand this process. It can be seen as a way of being in the world where places of origin become utmost important, and it can also create a sense of romantization of living beyond the nation-state or at unease in the host state (Peteet 2007).

To be a foreigner was an integral part of the Palestinian identity formation, and one of my interviewees told me how she felt about living as a foreigner:

"All our life we lived as foreigners. We sang an anthem that was not the anthem of our nation, we saluted a flag that was not the flag of our nation. And this was very difficult. The one who is living in a country, without making it normal, he has problems."
(Interview Cairo 2009)

She describes how she has to salute the Egyptian flag, even though she is not seen as an Egyptian, neither by herself or by other, and that as long as she cannot adjust to become an Egyptian, she will always have problems, feeling like a stranger.

One of the results of such lack of belonging is uncertainty about the future, are they going to live in Egypt or Palestine or another country? This uncertainty again creates an unsafe environment, where investments in the future are risky, because one might be forced to move and lose everything one have built up (Interview Cairo 2009). This feeling of lack of belonging can be psychologically difficult. One of my interviewees used the term "no-lander" to describe herself and her feeling of not belonging, neither in Egypt, nor Palestine.

Being a "no-lander" is usually manifested through individual feelings. Yet, as all feelings, they are results of real experiences. In this case the results of the experiences are difficult to express because the experiences are many and diverse. They are not leading towards specific knowledge, but rather towards general feelings that are difficult to express. This is illustrated in the following story about a young musician. He was once participating in an international competition, and he was about to be entered into the finals. When the managers found out that he was stateless, they decided that he could not participate in the finals because all the finalists had to represent their own country, and being stateless he could not do that. This left him feeling that he was somehow a lesser person than the other participants, because he lacked a quality that was obviously important in the competition. Such a feeling of inferiority was common among my interviewees, and it was often accompanied by a feeling of being subjected to unfair treatment. Their lack of a clear defined belonging as a result of their ambiguous nationality was something totally out of their control, yet they were judged by it every day.

The most common way of dealing with the lack of belonging following from the ambiguous nationality was to make a clear divide between nationality and citizenship. Even when using the same word, nationality, to describe both, it was clear that my interviewees assigned different meanings to it according to whether it should be interpreted as what I have defined as nationality or citizenship. They wished for recognition of their continued residency in Egypt, and Egyptian citizenship was seen as such a recognition. It would give them rights and justify their residence in Egypt, but according to them it would not alter their Palestinian nationality. Their nationality was connected with their feelings for Palestine, and those would not be altered by giving them rights in Egypt. Only a very small minority of my interviewees had Palestinian citizenship, yet they all defined themselves as Palestinians, whether they had Jordanian citizenship, Egyptian citizenship or no citizenship at all. At one level the wish for Egyptian citizenship breaks completely with the discourse of “belonging as nationality”. They claim that their nationality is Palestinian, yet they wish for citizenship as a means of recognition of their belonging in Egypt as a matter of their prolonged residence there. But at the same time, all of my interviewees had a strong sense that they belonged in Palestine because of their Palestinian nationality. In other words, they acknowledge that within the discourse of “belonging as nationality” they belong in Palestine, and that in an ideal world they would live there, but the discourse does not fit with their reality. The fact is that they live in Egypt, and because of that they want to be recognized as belonging in Egypt.

The divide between citizenship and nationality is probably most important for those who do not have a citizenship. If citizenship equals nationality, that would mean that they do not have a nationality either, but by differentiating between citizenship and nationality, they can make it clear that they have a nationality, even though they do not have a citizenship. They define themselves as Palestinian according to their inheritance and traditions, and in this way they feel that they belong somewhere. Because of the strong position of the “belonging as nationality” discourse, their nationality becomes very important to give them a sense of belonging. It is very important to learn about the Palestinian culture and traditions, because through that one is learning about the place one belong, and solidifying one's belonging in that place. The feeling of not belonging in Egypt is also most definitely important in pushing this agenda forward, because by feeling that one does not belong in one's place of residence, it becomes even more important to feel that one belongs somewhere else.

Even further along this line, some of my interviewees actively used their Palestinian identity as something to be proud of. One of them told me about a game she used to play with her brother, where they named famous people, and pretended as if they were Palestinian. In that way, they constructed a world where they belonged not only to a specific people, but to a specific people which had some great things to be proud of. And while playing this game, they also found out that

several of the people they were naming actually had some Palestinian background, thus confirming their pride in their people (Interview Cairo 2009).

It was also important for many of my interviewees to gain knowledge about Palestine and Palestinian tradition because of the prejudices they could meet when people found out that they were Palestinians. One of my interviewees reported that she had been harassed by her fellow students when she was in school. They used to tell her that her people sold their land, and she told me that the Egyptian history books taught the students this. One way to deal with this that was important to several of my interviewees was to gain knowledge about Palestine and their background, so that they could counter such stories by telling other stories based on their own knowledge (Interviews Cairo 2009).

The members of the folkloric groups of AlFalluja and Choral Abd El Shams were especially committed to learning about Palestinian folklore. Every week each group met in order to sing Palestinian songs and dance Palestinian dances, and they were also talking about Palestine, learning about their history, and discussing present events. For some of the participants this was part of getting to know their past and their roots. One of them described it as *"getting closer to my grandparents"*, another one said that when he comes to the choral or Fallujah, he feels as if he has found something that he lost. Their Palestinian nationality, and the efforts to maintain the Palestinian cultural heritage was also described with words such as *"instinct"* or *"connecting with something deep inside of me"* (Interviews Cairo 2009). The Palestinian nationality was a master-signifier for them, and the discourse that represented Palestinian nationality as consisting of folklore and traditions were naturalized through the hegemonic position this had gained during the Palestinian nation-building. Through this the necessity to remember and retain that culture was seen as something natural that followed automatically from their nationality.

Focusing on their Palestinian identity also made it possible for them to relate to a bigger group of people with the same issues as themselves. Because of the scatteredness of the Palestinian population in Egypt, for many Palestinians the only other Palestinians they meet are family members, or friends of their families, but by being a part of the GUPWom, the PRCS, the Choral Abd ElShams or the Fallujah, they meet other people with the same problems as themselves. A member of the GUPWom told me that all her life she has been feeling special, different from other people in Egypt, but when she found the GUPWom she found other people that were similar to herself, and so the union became very important to her (Interview Cairo 2009).

In short, my interviewees had two main reasons to join, and remain in, the GUPWom, Fallujah and Choral Abd ElShams. The first one was because they had an *"instinct"* that told them that as *"true Palestinians"* they should learn about the Palestinian cultural heritage and folklore. The

second reason was because these institutions functioned as gathering-places, where they could meet other people in similar situations as themselves. Because of this, the institutions are important assets to its users, and as such its leaders have significant power over the users. The leaders have the power to define the institutions and their policies, and in many respects to define what makes a person a “true Palestinian”. The users of the institutions have to conform to the leaders, at least explicitly, in order to keep their status as true Palestinians and be welcomed as members of the groups.

An important part of being a “true Palestinian” was speaking the Palestinian dialect of Arabic. One of the first times I visited in the GUPWom they were having a celebration for the Palestinian children that were doing good in school. One of the things they did during the celebration was to have a competition for the children to see who knew some different Palestinian words. Through this they were aiming to encourage the children to learn the Palestinian dialect. The son of a Palestinian woman explained to me how his mother changed her language into the Palestinian dialect whenever she was thinking about Palestine. He said it was like "changing the radio". He was clearly proud that his mother use the language that much, and told me that he did his best to learn it himself (Interview Cairo 2009).

Even though language was portrayed as an important part of being Palestinians, most of the Palestinians that grew up in Egypt do not know the Palestinian dialect very well. An interviewee was telling me about his experiences when he met a guy from Palestine and tried to learn the Palestinian dialect:

"At first I wasn't interested if I was talking Palestinian or not, but after a while, I saw that he was talking to me and I found that every time I spend time with him, I find 10 Palestinian there speaking Palestinian, and I'm supposed to be Palestinian and I don't know how to. I discovered that the Palestinians that I sit with treat me as if I'm Egyptian, so I started getting mixed up from inside not knowing whether I'm Egyptian or Palestinian. I found that I'm nothing, and it started upsetting me a lot. Little by little I started talking to them in a Palestinian dialect, and they started making fun of me, and laughing, like it's not said in this way, it's supposed to be said like that, what are you saying? These things really upset me until I decided at the end not to sit with them anymore." (Interview Cairo 2009)

For this man, his experiences meeting someone "more Palestinian" than him proved difficult, and it was the language that was determining for him. He found that since he did not speak the Palestinian language, he was not seen as a Palestinian by these men, yet his whole life he had learned that he was Palestinian not Egyptian, and in the end he felt like he was neither of them. He told me that:

"If I talk in front of an Egyptian Palestinian he will say (I speak) Palestinian, but when I talk in front of Palestinian Palestinians there are still things of course, this very distinct dialect, some parts are missing." (Interview Cairo 2009)

This demonstrates that the national identity is not something simple, that you are either inside or outside. Rather several types of sub-identities can exist within a nationality, so that within the category of Palestinians there is a difference between those growing up in Palestine and those growing up in other countries. When trying to reduce a national identity to one heterogeneous group, some people are invariably left in between two groups, because they fit in neither of them. For those of my interviewees that focused too much on their Palestinian identity, meeting people that were more Palestinian than themselves, and at the same time having to face the notion of national identity as something that is supposed to be pure, not mixed, made them feel even more lost than before (Interviews Cairo 2009).

Another problem rising from the focus of Palestinian nationality was a feeling that Palestinians were different, because Palestine is a different nation. Palestine is a nation without a state and thus it is different from many other nations. Within a nationalist discourse, all nations should have their own states, and a common way to interpret it if a nation does not have a state is that that particular nation is a weak or bad nation, that does not deserve its own state. The fact that a nation does not have a state might even give rise to questions about whether it qualifies as a nation at all. Because the Palestinian nation does not have a sovereign state, some of my interviewees were feeling slightly inferior as a result of their nationality (Interviewees Cairo 2009). An interpretation that could lead to this feeling is that Palestine has “allowed” her territories to be occupied by Israel and thus she is a weak nation, and all people with Palestinian nationality are weak people. Within a different discourse the interpretation might be that there is no sovereign Palestinian state because of historical circumstances which have very little to do with the Palestinian nation, and even less to do with the Palestinians alive today. The second explanation is generally accepted as the most rational explanation, yet it still seems that the first explanation has a certain hold over the feelings of some of my interviewees. This can also be very negative, because an increased focus on Palestine as a different, weak or substandard nation, and her people as weak people, can lead some people into a state of depression that might make their conditions even worse. Take the example of the student that said that he could not get a job as a professor because he is Palestinian. This student is not working hard in school, because he knows that he will not get that job, so he thinks there is no point. As a result of this, he will go out of school with bad grades. If he did not focus on the fact that he was Palestinian and could not get the job, the chance that he would get better grades is higher. Even though he probably would not get the job, because he still is a Palestinian, most people would agree that it is better to go out of school with good grades than with bad grades. But because the student focused too much on the limitations laid upon him as a Palestinian, he could not find the necessary motivation to work hard with his studies.

Another way of dealing with their lack of belonging in Egypt that some of my interviewees used in certain occasions was to hide their Palestinian nationality. As earlier discussed the marginalisation of the Palestinians arises only when their Palestinian identity become evident, for example in situations where IDs are required. As a reaction to this, a young woman said that whenever she was going out with her parents, she asked them not to speak the Palestinian dialect. She did not want people to know that they are Palestinian, because foreigners pay extra in cabs, to enter museums and many similar things (Interview Cairo 2009). In my study this was not very prevalent, probably because I have purposely chosen people with strong feelings about their Palestinian nationality, but ElAbed (2009) discusses this further in her study which is based on a representative sample of the all the Palestinians in Egypt. The fact that I also found tendencies towards this in my own study just underlines the importance of such mechanisms.

Accepting the guest metaphor?

Egypt has effectively represented itself as a host-country for the Palestinians residing in it, and the Palestinians are represented as guests. Throughout their lives, the Palestinians are made to understand this, by having to renew their residence permits regularly, having to pay extra school fees, and accepting worse jobs because of their nationality. The feelings of not belonging have been reinforced by the Palestinian institutions, and their focus on returning to Palestine. The fact that these institutions are so important for the creation of a community and a Palestinian identity in Egypt, have made most of my interviewees accept their discourse, at least explicitly. During my fieldwork, I often heard people say things like:

"We know that the Egyptians are suffering from the lack of job opportunities here in Egypt, and we appreciate what they are doing, so the Egyptian citizens are suffering the same." (Interview Cairo 2009)

Another interviewee was quick to point out that the situation is worse in many other countries:

"... but when I think of it, I mean a part of these difficulties that we face as Palestinians, also Egyptian citizens face it. But I think that we Palestinians that came to Egypt are luckier than our counterparts that live in Lebanon for example, because the situation there is really horrible. But here we are treated as citizens. If you tell an Egyptian that you are a Palestinian you find them welcoming. They are very good people. I think the Egyptian government doesn't differ from any other government in the world. In Kuwait and Dubai, and any other Arab country, Palestinians are treated the same. They treat us as foreigners, and the governments don't sympathize a lot with the issue" (Interview Cairo 2009)

By accepting a subject position as guests, they are also forced to accept that the Egyptian government have to prioritize their own citizens, and appreciate any help they get. They are cut off

from all opportunities to complain, because guests do not complain. Guests accept what they get and are grateful for that, or they leave.

But even though my interviewees hardly volunteered any opinions that were directly in conflict with the “belonging of nationality” discourse and hardly made any direct complaints against the government, the stories they told me illustrated that they had a lot to complain about. They were always very carefully in wording any opinions on the government and an interviewee even told me that people are not allowed to speak about the government in Egypt. Another interviewee told me that there were some things he would say that I could not expect the others to say because of their relationships with the PLO-institutions. The limits on their freedom to speak can be illustrated by this quotation about the government: *“They have a big burden, lots of youths and a big population. It is not only about the Palestinians. I am angry, but I sympathize with them sometimes.”* (Interview Cairo 2009). The interviewee is expressing her frustration with the situation and with the government, but at the same time she is careful not to criticize them. This care has its root in the experiences of the Palestinian community. They have been told that their group constitute a security risk on numerous occasions, like in passport checks and army regulations, and the Palestinian community as a whole has experienced numerous arrest sweeps in periods when they have been politically active (ElAbed 2009, Interviewees Cairo 2009). So even though it is the Egyptian government, and to a certain extent the leadership in the PLO-institutions, that have created the many difficult situations that my interviewees were more than happy to tell me about, they could not direct their criticism and frustration towards the government. On the other hand it was very easy to criticize the Israeli authorities for not letting them return to their home-land. This was a way they could easily direct their frustration and feel that they were making a difference. By working on their own identity, and continuously emphasize their Palestinian nationality, they were opposing Israeli politics.

Several interviewees were afraid that Israel was trying to wipe out the Palestinians by wiping out their culture. This is in line with the discourse of “belonging as nationality”, because by wiping out the Palestinian culture, they wipe out what makes up the Palestinian nation, thus wiping out the nation itself and the nation's right to a territory. Both the GUPWom and the PRCS is working with preserving the culture, through their folkloric groups, and through employing people to make traditional Palestinian handicrafts. Some of the younger people expressed that they lost hopes in politics, and one of the stated that: *“It's not about the land anymore. The land is known to be stolen, but our culture is very important.”* (Interview Cairo 2009). By being as Palestinian as possible, they were proving that they belong in Palestine, in a way that is accepted within the discourse of “belonging as nationality”, and in this way they oppose Israel's presentation of historical Palestine as an empty land. Even though there is nothing much that can be done about the

conflict by one single individual, by keeping and spreading their culture they can try to spread attention about their case and their problems, and let the world know that they exist. It was also important in their personal lives, because it opposed the feeling of powerlessness that was so common among my interviewees. There is not much one of them, as an individual, can do in order to make a difference in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, but by keeping their identity they felt that they were trying, and by doing what they can at least they ease their consciousness and add some meaning to their lives (Interviews Cairo 2009).

Even though it is difficult to work with their situation in Egypt, and much easier to criticize the Israeli government, the emphasis among my interviewees on telling me about all the difficulties in their daily life illustrates that working with their situation in Egypt is also very important. Many of my interviewees found it unfair that they were treated as guests. They: *"are not here out of our own free will, so the rules should be different for us"* (Interview Cairo 2009). This statement emphasizes the fact that the Palestinians are not guests that can leave if they do not like the host. In addition their long stay should disqualify them as guests, because no-one should be condemned to live their whole lives as guests, with the lack of rights following from that. A clear wish from many of my interviewees, especially the stateless and the ones that lacked the finances necessary to live a good life as foreigners in Egypt, was to have Egyptian citizenship. Only as citizens can they secure their rights as nationals in a legal context, and only as citizens can they avoid being represented as guests. Giving the Palestinians in Egypt citizenship would represent a very small incline in the Egyptian population, and would give massive benefits to the Palestinians, but the opposition against giving them citizenship is still huge, both from the Egyptian government and from some parts of the Palestinian leadership. We have already seen that the right of Palestinians to return to Palestine is given as the main reason not to give Palestinians Egyptian citizenship, but I believe there is another reason that is important to Palestinian leadership. Although this was never told me directly, I believe the Palestinian leadership is afraid that the enthusiasm for fighting the Palestinian cause would be significantly diminished among Palestinians if they got Egyptian citizenship. By gaining citizenship, they would start seeing themselves more as Egyptians, and less as Palestinians and thus identify themselves less with the Palestinian cause. In other words, they are afraid that the willingness to fight for the Palestinian cause is not big enough, and because of this they want as many people as possible to be born with the "obligation" to fight for the cause.

The traditional Palestinian organizations only organizes people with Palestinian decent. Because of their control over the PLO-institutions their leaders have some power over these people, but not over other supporters of the Palestinian cause. People of non-Palestinian descent have nowhere to go to support the Palestinian cause, however the popular support for the cause is big in Egypt. The cause is seen as a just cause, and the outcome of the Palestinian struggle is also

important in determining how we want our world to be. The cause has earlier been an important root for mass-mobilization in Egypt, and could very well become so again (Interviews and observation, Cairo 2009).

That is probably also why the Palestinians are seen as a security risk by the Egyptian authorities. People could be drawn towards the Palestinian cause of their own free will, because they see it as a just cause, but the potential for mass-mobilization is very dangerous for the sitting regime. In order to make such mass-mobilization possible it is necessary to work within Egypt for a democratization of the regime. The country has been ruled with emergency-laws since the murder of Sadat in 1981, and any political organization outside of the established political parties is strictly forbidden. Under the emergency laws the organizers of any event collecting more than a few people are obligated to notify the national security, and any such meeting would most likely be forbidden. All demonstrations are also forbidden, and they often turn violent as the security forces intervene. The organizers of demonstrations are usually prosecuted (ElAbed 2009, interviews Cairo 2009). By a democratization of the whole of Egypt the Palestinian people, as well as the rest of the Egyptian people, would benefit, and at the same time it would be opening the way for fighting the Palestinian cause much more effectively.

Not many of my interviewees accept the discourse of “belonging as nationality” completely, but it still has a real impact on their lives. Yet, because "belonging as nationality" is a socially constructed discourse, it can be socially deconstructed and made socially irrelevant. When accepting "belonging as nationality", nationality becomes the only relevant factor in deciding where people have a right to live through where they belong. But by looking at belonging without seeing it through a nationalist discourse, other factors become just as relevant. For example all of my interviewees have a clear belonging in Egypt. They have lived in Egypt for a long time, many of them for the whole of their lives. They speak the Egyptian variant of Arabic, and many of them have been going to Egyptian schools. In addition they have a big part of their social network in Egypt, and many other kinds of immovable assets, such as for example jobs or school enrolment.

At the same time most of my interviewees clearly belong in Palestine. They all have one or more parents or grandparents from Palestine, many of them have friends and relatives in Palestine, and some of them still have strong connections to specific places within Palestine.

These people belong both in Palestine and in Egypt, and their belonging to both places can easily be proved without even mentioning nationality. Today they are not fully accepted in any of these countries, and the discourse of "belonging as nationality" makes it impossible for them to be so. But by moving away from this discourse, the Palestinians could be given the opportunity to choose for themselves where to live by proving their belonging to that place in terms of other

factors than nationality.

For those who feel that they belong in Egypt and want to live there, it is possible to continue their engagement for the Palestinian cause with an Egyptian citizenship. Their actual ties to Palestine will still be there, and it might even be easier for them to work with the cause, because they will not be identified as security risks through their ID-papers. In addition the Palestinian cause is a just cause that many people are willing to fight for because it is about how they want the world to be, not about their own connection to Palestine. Many Egyptians have strong feelings about the Palestinian cause even though they do not have any personal ties to Palestine.

The discourse of "belonging as nationality" has a great impact on the daily life of my interviewees. Most of them are experiencing it through a lack of citizenship, which has severe consequences for them both when staying in Egypt and on their attempts to travel to other countries. Stateless people lack basic rights such as the right to a place to live, work and education, and they always run the risk of being subjected to detention if they cannot obtain a residence permit in the country where they are living.

Being stateless can also lead to a profound feeling of not belonging anywhere. When a group of migrants is rejected by the authorities in both the home-land and the host-country, it has severe emotional consequences for the individuals affected. In order to cope with the feeling of not belonging in Egypt, many of my interviewees emphasized their sense of belonging in Palestine. Their position as guests in Egypt made it difficult to complain about the conditions of their stay, and their vulnerable position to the Egyptian government made it impossible to pursue effective criticism of the government regulations. This left Israel as the obvious target for their frustration. It was the foundation of Israel and the subsequent conflicts that drove them out of their home-land and caused them to lose their assets and rights, and it is Israel's denial to let them return that have left them in their current position. In order for them to resist Israel's construction of them as simply Arabs, that do not have any claims to the land where Israel was founded, they have emphasized their Palestinian nationality. They have retained the Palestinian folklore and cultural heritage in order to show the world that they are Palestinians that belong in Palestine. And in the Palestinian institutions they have found a fellowship that enables them to feel less alone with their problems.

But even though opposition to Israel was their primary way to lift their frustration, their stories illustrated several grievances with the Egyptian government. And even though this is a much more dangerous target for their frustration some of my interviewees expressed a wish to work against the government and towards a more democratic Egypt.

Chapter 7:

Conclusion

This thesis has been concerned with discursive practices that equal belonging to nationality, and the consequences of that for a Palestinian community in Egypt. It have sought to answer the following research question.

- How is the discourse of “belonging as nationality” experienced and used within a Palestinian community in Egypt?

In the theory chapter I discussed the discourses around nationalism, and highlighted the concepts of home-land and host-country as highly important for forming migrant identity. Migrants are often met with conceptions of home-land and home-country, and expectations to behave like guests in their countries of residence. This makes it difficult to complain about bad conditions, even for second and third generation immigrants. Because belonging is often constructed as depending exclusively on nationality, people that are living outside of their national home-land can sometimes experience a lack of belonging in their countries of residence. This feeling is often attributed to rootlessness as a consequence of moving away from the national home-country, and these sorts of interpretations can often hide other issues that keeps the migrants from settling in their new countries of residence.

Chapter 4, *A Background on Palestinians in Egypt*, introduced the case in my study. The history of the conflict between Israel and Palestine has had a big impact on Palestinians in Egypt. Both parts in the conflict have been utilizing elements from the discourse of "belonging as nationality", and the construction of the Palestinian nation have been a major source of disagreement. While Zionists have attempted to construct all Arabs as belonging to the same nation thus disqualifying the Palestinian claims to historical Palestine, the Arab states have refused to integrate Palestinians in their countries and insisted that they belong only in Palestine. In Egypt this was accompanied by a military conflict with Israel that resulted in the wars of 1948, 1967 and 1973 and several smaller confrontations, but since Egypt signed the Camp David Agreements in 1979 they have abolished any attempts at winning a military confrontation against Israel. They still retain that Palestinian belong in Palestine and cannot be allowed complete integration to Egypt, but their efforts towards freeing Palestine by force have failed.

Chapter 5, *The political construction of host-country and home-land*, explores the following sub

research-question:

- How has the discourse of "belonging as nationality" been used to describe and determine the relations of Palestinians living in Egypt to Palestine and Egypt?

Throughout their lives, Palestinians in Egypt have been told again and again that they do not belong in Egypt. They have not always been told so directly, but much more important is the messages that they get through the laws and regulations that are governing their lives. Every time they are treated different because of their nationality, this strengthens their feeling that they do not belong. When they have to apply for resident permits or work permits, or when they have to pay extra school-fees they are constructed as guests that could leave any time they wish, even though they have nowhere else to go.

Their exclusion have always been grounded in their Palestinian nationality, and many of them want to go back to the place where they are told that they belong, but in the attempt to go back, they have to face another authority that tell them that they do not belong there either. They are effectively blocked from both visiting and settling in Palestine because they are denied the necessary permits from the Israeli government.

At the same time not all of them want to go back, and a lot of them want to go back only to the places where their families originally came from. This illustrates that the dream of return is not as homogeneous as it is sometimes portrayed. When listening to the leaders of the PLO-institutions in Cairo, it is easy to get the impression that all Palestinians in Egypt would leave everything in order to go to Palestine if they were only allowed to do so by the Israeli government. However my study shows that this is not the case. Not everybody wants to return. Some of my interviewees made it very clear that they have their whole life in Egypt. This is where they have their houses, their jobs and their friends, and those are things they are not willing to give up. Among those who wanted to return, they always made it clear that their return was contingent on certain factors. They need a place to stay, a guaranteed income and a safe environment, basic assets that all people need and that few would willingly go without. For some this is accompanied by a wish to return to the families' original lands. They wanted back the things their families lost when fleeing, and so the dream of return was not about some general romantic notion of going back to their home-country. If they cannot go back to their original lands and have back their assets there, they can just as well stay in Cairo, where they have built their present lives.

Peteet (2007) described the dream of return not as a dream of going back to the home-land, but as a dream of getting back what they lost when they were forced to move. It is a dream of justice and recognition of their rights, a sense of belonging in the place where they live, and a safe place to build their lives. For some the dream of return can also represent a threat. At the same time as they want to fulfil their obligations to their country, the uncertainty about where they are going to

have their future are scaring them. This makes it more difficult to invest in the lives they are living today, because they risk losing everything if the Egyptian government decides that they have to return to Palestine.

Chapter 6, *Living in between, and the struggle for belonging*, is discussing the question:

- How are my interviewees experiencing and reacting to “belonging as nationality” in their daily lives?

On one level, the discourse of “belonging as nationality” is something that was forced on my interviewees from above. They did not have a choice themselves to decide whether they belong in Palestine or Egypt by themselves. They were told by the Egyptian authorities that they do not belong in Egypt, and they were told by the Israeli authorities that they do not belong in Israel, both sides claiming their nationality as the reason. Because they were denied the opportunity to settle as citizens in both countries, many of them have ended up stateless. As well as creating formal difficulties, such as lack of basic rights and problems when attempting to cross international borders, statelessness can create a profound sense of not belonging anywhere. For my interviewees, their Palestinian nationality, and the belonging in Palestine that follows from it, became a comfort when they felt as outsiders in Egypt. Through their nationality they had something that Egyptians did not have. They learned about Palestinian folklore and culture and some of them learned the Palestinian language, and they were proud of their Palestinian heritage. But most importantly, Palestine represented a fellowship with other people that experienced the same marginalization in their daily life and a place for resisting Israel and the lack of justice they experienced as a result of leaving Palestine.

At the same time as my interviewees used some elements from the discourse, they rejected others. Their frustration with the situation was evident from the stories they told me, and they were sick of being treated as guests in the country they had lived all their lives. They wanted to be recognized as citizens, either in a peaceful Palestine, or in the Egypt where they grew up. They wanted equal rights and they wanted compensation for the injustice that they and their families have suffered.

The discourse of “belonging as nationality” is experienced by Palestinians in Egypt through the laws and regulations that are utilizing the discourse. For the lawmakers it is a question of winning an ideological contest over where the Palestinians belong, but for the Palestinians in Egypt this has resulted in extensive marginalization and feelings of not belonging. The Palestinians in the community in centre of my analysis are also using elements from the discourse actively in order to interpret their experiences. They are bound to the discourse through their involvement in the PLO-institutions, but they are resisting central elements in the discourse in other situations. Two issues

are especially central in my case. The first issue is the dream about returning to Palestine. Palestine represents what was lost to my interviewees when they were forced to leave the country, and the dream of return is also a dream of justice. Regarding this issue, the whole community uses the discourse of "belonging as nationality" to justify their claims to the land and forward their fight for justice. The second issue is their wish for Egyptian citizenship. This wish is not uniform throughout the community. It is stronger among those who are struggling with the consequences of statelessness every day, and weaker among those who do not feel these problems in their own lives. It is directly opposed by those who are leading the struggle to return to Palestine and at the same time do not experience the problems of being stateless themselves. The last group is utilizing the discourse of "belonging as nationality" to claim that the first group will lose their Palestinian nationality if they obtain Egyptian citizenship. The first group is more concerned with their day to day problems. Those who argue that Palestinian should be allowed Egyptian citizenship argues that this would not alter their nationality, on the contrary their lack of Egyptian citizenship might make them hide their Palestinian nationality in order to avoid trouble.

Because belonging is often constructed as depending exclusively on nationality, people that are living outside of their national home-land can sometimes experience a lack of belonging in their countries of residence. This feeling is often attributed to rootlessness as a consequence of moving away from the national home-country, and these sorts of interpretations can often hide other issues that keeps the migrants from settling in their new countries of residence.

My study of a Palestinian community in Egypt serves to demonstrate how important discourses are in forming the lives of the people that are subjected to the discourses. Through laws and regulations, as well as through norms for behaviour, discourses have an enormous impact on the lives of people that have no real say in the formation of these discourses. Discourses can be used by different authorities to fight ideological battles, and to the degree that this is done the authorities have to make sure that all their actions are supporting their own discourse. This can be an important reason for governments to ignore the needs of their peoples for shorter or longer periods of time. When people become reduced to actors in politically contested discourses there is a serious danger that important legislations governing their lives might be altered by events totally out of their own control.

Nationalist discourses have long had a hegemonic status when it comes to describing the division of the world into territories ruled by different groups, and the nation-state has been the primary unit in this division. In addition belonging has often been interpreted within a nationalist perspective as being determined solely by nationality. Cross national migration is challenging this interpretation, and it becomes more and more common to accept that home-lands can be changed

and belonging can develop over time. My study has illustrated the many problems that arises from interpreting belonging as something dependent on an eternal homeland that cannot be changed. Increased migration and new criteria for belonging might also challenge the hegemony of the nation-state as the only possible unit for dividing the world into sovereign countries. Many present nations fit the criteria of the nation-state badly, and this discrepancy is likely to increase as a consequence of increased migration. I have also argued that nations should not be seen as homogeneous units, but rather as something diverse and consisting of many sub-groups. Other writers have argued that globalization has rendered the nation a less relevant unit, and that super-regional and sub-regional units are becoming more important.

I have argued that nationality is a very central concept in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and that the conflict can be constructed in a very simplified way as a conflict over two different nations' right to inhabit and govern a territory. The centrality of "nationality as belonging" in the treatment of Palestinians in Egypt by both the Egyptian and the Israeli authorities seems to strengthen this argument. If this is true, the impact on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict might be very important. If we understand the conflict as a conflict about nationality, then a possible solution might be to construct a new state in historical Palestine that is not depending on nationality. A two-state solution, like the one that was proposed in the Oslo-agreements can never fulfil the Palestinian dream of return, because it does not give justice to those who have their family ties in present day Israel. A real solution must allow the refugees to return to their original lands, but my study, as well as other studies on Palestinians in exile, have suggested that the amounts of Palestinians that would actually return if this was possible will be quite limited. For those who do not want to return, a solution to the conflict must ensure their rights to full integration in their host-countries. In this way belonging will not be determined by a political contest over different discourses, but rather by a choice taken individually by everybody that is affected.

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Appendix 1: Interview Guide

The interview guide consist of 5 main questions. These questions are open questions that I asked all the interviewees. I used the rest of the questions to keep the conversation going if the interviewees did not know what to say, or as a reminder to myself about relevant follow up questions. I did not use the exact same wording of the question that I have written down. Because I tried to keep the interviews conversation like, I could not depend on using the exact same phrasing every time.

1. Can you tell me about your Palestinian background? What makes you a Palestinian?
 - a. Are you from Palestine yourself, or is your family from Palestine?
 - b. When did you/they leave Palestine? Why?
 - c. Why did you/they choose to come to Egypt?
2. How was it (for them) to come to Egypt/ how is it to live in Egypt?
 - a. How was it to find a job?
 - b. Did you need a work permit? What about residence permit?
 - c. Legal status, refugee, citizen? Egyptian documents.
 - d. What about your education? School fees?
 - e. What do you think about the Egyptian government?
 - f. What do you think about the Egyptian people?
 - g. Other opinions about Egypt?
3. Is it important to keep a strong Palestinian community in Egypt? Why?
 - a. Are you involved with any Palestinian groups? Why? Why not?
 - b. What are you doing in this group?
 - c. Is this group important for you? Why?
 - d. Is the group important for the Palestinian community in Egypt? Why? How?
4. Can you tell me about your relation to Palestine?
 - a. Have you ever been visiting Palestine?
 - b. What papers did you need to go there?
 - c. Do you want to visit Palestine (again)? Why? Why not?
 - d. What papers will you need to go there?
 - e. Do you want to live in Palestine? Why? Why not Can you?
 - f. Will it be possible for you to live in Palestine in the future?
5. Can you tell me about your relation to the Palestinian/Israeli conflict?
 - a. Is it affecting your daily life today? How?
 - b. Are you involved in any work related to the conflict? Why? Why not? How?

- c. Can your life in Egypt affect the Palestinian conflict in any way? How?/Why not?
 - d. Can anything people in Egypt do make a difference? How?/ Why not?
 - e. Does it make a difference for the Palestinian cause if you keep your Palestinian identity or try to become Egyptian?
 - f. Is there anything specific that is affecting your relation to the conflict?
6. Is there anything else you want to tell me?